new masses

J. Refregier

WHILE PRICES SOAR
—see page 12

CAN A NEGRO STUDY LAW IN TEXAS?
—Lisa Call

A SHORT STORY
—Meridel Le Sueur

TOWARD PEOPLE'S STANDARDS IN ART
—Howard Fast

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just a minute

WITH this issue NEW MASSES is proud to announce the addition to its Board of Contributing Editors of Dr. William Edward Burkhardt DuBois, distinguished scholar, author and, for more than half a century, fighter for Negro rights and human freedom.

Dr. DuBois was born seventy-eight years ago in Great Barrington, Mass. He graduated from Fisk University, took his M. A. and Ph. D at Harvard and received a two-year fellowship at the University of Berlin. He soon found himself fighting the society that brutalized the underpriveleged and made such an education as he had had an impossibility for all but a tiny minority of Negroes and of the people generally. He became one of the founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and of the Pan-African Conference. He has written scores of books and tracts in behalf of Negro freedom and against imperialism: his latest book is *Color and Democracy*.

And the scholar has become a man of direct action: not long ago Dr. DuBois appeared on a New York picketline and spoke on behalf of the strikers. "Dr. DuBois' step was logical," wrote James W. Ford in the Chicago *Defender;* for "by drawing himself closer to the struggles of the workers he adds strength to the Negro people's movement."

SEVERAL months ago the girls in our circulation department, who have been carrying on a private feed-and-clothe-Europe campaign of their own, sent a package of clothes to France. We think you'll be interested in the letter they've just received.

". . . Madame Gabriel Peri, secretary of the Association of the Families of the Executed, sent me your package. Thank you for your infinite generosity and kindness. I am a French Communist whose husband was shot on the eve of the Liberation. My husband was arrested by the Gestapo on Aug. 12, 1943, was frightfully tortured in their jails, condemned to death and shot Aug. 12, 1944, exactly one year later. However, he showed great courage, knowing that he died for a wonderful cause.

"I have two children: a big boy of sixteen, Gerard, who is studying to be a radio engineer and is passionately devoted to mathematics, and an adorable little girl.

"We are from the Midi. We had to leave our beautiful country and come to Paris to hide in 1940, because the police were looking for my husband, who was the editor of a Communist paper in Marseilles. Paris is so big that we were able to camouflage ourselves and stay together for three more years . . . but our luck did not hold.

"I live in a suburb of Paris, Seine et Oise, at Vesinet, a charming place which many of your countrymen will remember. It's rather tiring for me as I must take the train, but apartments are impossible to find in Paris. . . . Again a thousand thanks.

"HELENE PAURIOL."

WHO'S WHO in this issue: Meridel Le Sueur's latest book is *North Star Country*. . . . Karl Korstad is business agent of Local 19—in Memphis, Tenn.—of the Food, Tobacco, Agricultural and Allied Workers-CIO. . . . Milton Wolff is campaign director of the Action Committee to Free Spain Now. A major in the Lincoln Brigade in Spain, he also saw action in Italy and the East, where he was commissioned in the field. B. M.

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Can a Negro Study Law in Texas? Lisa Call . . 3
Awaiting the Barbarians: a poem Constantine Kavafis 4
We'll Make Your Bed: a short story Meridel LeSueur 6
Gropper's Cartoon 11
Lerner's Lament: an editorial A. B. Magil . . . 12
Tobacco Road, Union Style Karl Korstad 13
Toward People's Standards in Art Howard Fast 16
Mail Call 19
Book Reviews 21
Talking Beasts and Magic Creatures William Thor Burger 25
Films Joseph Foster 29

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CAN A NEGRO STUDY LAW IN TEXAS?

One tap on the portals of the state university has rocked the Jim Crow structure of Southern education. The story of the Heman Sweatt case.

By LISA CALL

HEMAN MARION SWEATT was one of several thousand persons who applied for admission to the University of Texas this spring. Scholastically, he was probably among the best qualified of the applicants. His education, which was marked with high honors, included a Bachelor of Arts degree in biological science from Wiley College at Marshall, Texas, and a year of postgraduate work in public health science at the University of Michigan. It would seem that there should have been no question of Mr. Sweatt's admission to the Law School of the University of Texas. And yet, his application was deemed extraordinary enough by the university officials to have the matter turned over to the state Attorney General for a ruling.

Heman Sweatt, you see, is a Negro. And in the language of Grover Sellers, Attorney General of Texas, the case therefore resolves itself down to a consideration of "whether a person of Negro ancestry," otherwise qualified for admission into the University of Texas, may be legally admitted to that institution. The answer of the Attorney General was "No."

I visited Heman Sweatt recently at his home in Houston, where he works as a letter carrier. Up to 1938, when his education was interrupted by ill health, he had been working toward a master's degree in public health science, conscious of the sore need to better the health standards of the Negro people of the South. He was unable to return to school because of financial difficulties, but meanwhile he became absorbed in the study of political science and law, and decided to resume his education, when possible, in the field of law.

"I became fascinated," he told me, "with the peculiar methods by which politicians refuse to face law as it is actually written. They write the laws and then they strangely skirt them." Mr. Sweatt ought to know: as he spoke he held in his hand the Attorney General's ruling in his case, which "strangely skirted" the laws and constitution of our land.

Heman Sweatt is an intelligent,

Charles White.

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thoughtful, carefully spoken person. He could make a fine contribution to his chosen field. It is a loss to the people of Texas, of the South, of the nation, if his talents are denied fulfilment.

But this is a question that goes beyond Heman Sweatt, goes beyond Negro education in Texas. It vitally touches the lives of all the people of the state. The roots which have borne this bitter fruit are the same as those which impoverish the working people of the South, Negro and white. Stripped of the legal terminology of the state Attorney General, this case becomes a component part of the urgent issue of democracy versus fascism in the South today.

For the second time in two years the University of Texas has become a battleground in this fight. Last year the shocked attention of the nation was focused on the university when the ouster of University President Dr. Homer Price Rainey revealed how public education is controlled in Texas. Dr. Rainey, one of the best educators in the South, was removed because his liberal approach to education was intolerable to the monopoly-controlled Board of Regents of the university. During hearings by a State Senate investigating committee, D. Frank Strickland of the Board of Regents indicated that he thought Dr. Rainey had been too interested in interracial relations and in education for Negroes. Dr. Rainey's fate has been shared by others who dared to inject the flavor of democracy into public education in Texas.

In his decision in the Sweatt case the Attorney General brazenly waves the banner of "equal but separate" educational facilities for Negroes. Let us take a look at what is meant by "equal but separate" in Texas. Of the children of school age in Texas, 84.5 percent are white and 15.5 percent are Negro. In this age group (six to seventeen years), sixty-seven percent of both Negro and white children attend school. The school year for the white students is thirty-six weeks; for the Negro students, thirty-three weeks. The yearly per capita expenditure for the education of white students is $59.02; Negro students average $37.45 per capita, or 63.5 percent as much. This despite the fact that the state gives the school districts in per capita funds the same amount for a Negro child as for a white child. White students enjoy the use of 94.5 percent of the school property of Texas; the remaining 5.6 percent is used for the education of Negro students. Teachers' salaries average $1,353.58 per year for white teachers and $919.85 for Negro teachers. It is interesting to note in this connection that a higher proportion of Negro teachers have college degrees than do white teachers—the percentages being sixty-six percent and sixty-five percent, respectively.

The state constitution provides that the legislature shall set up a state university for Negroes whenever the need arises, the site to be selected in an election. In 1882, Austin, Texas (the site of the University of Texas) was chosen by the people as the site for a state university for Negroes. Flouting the will of the people, the state officials set up the school at Prairie View, Texas, and made it a sham in terms of what a university should really be.

Prairie View University, the only state institution of higher learning open to Negroes in Texas, is a branch of the Texas Agricultural and Mechanical College, and its policies are determined by the board of directors of A&M, which has no Negro representation. The president of A&M is president of Prairie View, and the active head of the school bears the title "principal." The selection of a principal for Prairie View is made by white people exclusively. The reactionary Jesse Jones-owned Houston *Chronicle*, commenting recently on the selection of a new principal for Prairie View, stated that a man had been chosen who was most fitted to be head of Prairie View because his grandmother was a slave. The Houston *Informer*, progressive spokesman of the Negro people in Texas, replied editorially that "That is a hell of a qualification for a college head. Nearly every Negro in Texas who is fifty years old could qualify on that criterion."

Prairie View offers no training for degrees in law, medicine and other professional fields, except teaching. Students are required by law to sign an agreement that they will teach in the public schools for Negroes one year for each year they attend the college. It has been the practice in Texas, as well as in other Southern states, to meet Negro demands for higher education in professional fields by having instructors conduct special classes for Negroes somewhere off the white school

Philip Evergood.

AWAITING THE BARBARIANS

Translated from the Greek by RAE DALVEN

Whom do we await, gathered in the agora?
The barbarians are coming today,
Why this inactivity in the Senate?
Why do the Senators sit without passing laws?
The barbarians are coming today,
What laws more can the Senators pass?
When the barbarians come, they will enact laws.
Why did our Emperor awake so early,
And sits at the city's principal gate,
On the throne, official, wearing his crown?
The barbarians are coming today,
The Emperor waits to receive their chief,
Naturally he is prepared
To present him with a scroll,
Inscribed with many titles and names.
Why did our two consuls and praetors leave today
With red embroidered togas?

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grounds, or by helping to finance the education of Negro students in Northern universities. This latter practice, however, has been ruled out by the Supreme Court. Last year the Texas legislature passed a phony bill changing the name of Prairie View State Normal and Industrial College for Colored Teachers to Prairie View University, and authorizing the board of directors of Texas A&M College to set up professional courses at Prairie View "University" comparable to those offered at the University of Texas, if a demand existed. In addition, the biennial budget of the "university" was recently increased from $851,000 to nearly $2,000,000—while her sister college, Texas A&M, got a budget of $15,000,000.

Even the conservative Galveston *Daily News* commented recently on this legislation that "Nobody who is honest could pretend that these measures were adequate. It amounted to little more than a gesture, and another attempt to sidestep the issue and to keep from doing something about a matter in which Texas is grossly amiss."

MRS. LULA B. WHITE, executive secretary of the Houston chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and perhaps the outstanding Negro woman leader in the state, was a member of a committee of state Negro leaders who accompanied Heman Sweatt to Austin and conferred there with Texas University officials on Negro education in the state. Mrs. White, who is a Prairie View graduate herself, told me:

"I would like all people to understand that the Negro people of Texas do not consider the changing of the name of Prairie View College to Prairie View University a move forward toward higher education for Negroes of Texas. It only shows to the world the fascist ideas held deep in the hearts of the lawmakers and inherent in the political machinery of our state. As a matter of fact, Negroes have never considered Prairie View College a first class college—and now to name it a university is tragic. The motive of this move is to hold back equal education from American citizens of minority groups. That is why Heman Marion Sweatt and others seeking higher education will be compelled to fight by court action."

Attorney General Grover Sellers has ruled that the application of Heman Sweatt for admission to the Texas University Law School constitutes a "demand," under the recent legislation, for a course in law at Prairie View. But Heman Sweatt is not jumping at the chance to study law at Prairie View. He hopes to pursue his application for admission to Texas University further, and has turned the case over to a lawyer. "It would be almost like being asked to marry an unborn girl," he said. "First of all, you don't know if it is going to be a girl or not; and then, you don't know if you would want to marry her even if it is a girl."

There is no denying that the racial prejudice fomented by the capitalists, the feudal plantation owners and their instrument, the Ku Klux Klan, has had disastrous effects on the people of Texas. But wars and depressions, near-slavery and hunger teach forceful lessons. More and more the people of Texas are learning that divided from their Negro comrades they are barred from making any real progress in lifting their own oppression. The organization of industrial unions in the South and the winning of the recent strikes have been made possible because of the decisive role played by Negro workers.

It must have given much discomfort to the reactionary forces in Texas that a large part of the student body of the University of Texas has agreed with the idea of attending classes together with Negro students. The reactionaries are not a little concerned over the rising tide of popularity of Dr. Rainey, who is expected to enter the race for governor. Yes, and it was an unhappy day for the reactionaries when earlier this year Negro and white AFL members in Houston staged the first general strike in the South.

This is an election year. Poll tax payments in Texas have broken all records, even with the poll tax exemption of veterans. Included in this record poll tax collection are 275,000 payments by Negro citizens. The role of progressive Negro leaders in rolling up this large poll tax figure foreshadows the increasingly vital part that Negroes will play in making the South democratic. As Mrs. White of the Houston NAACP put it, "Thank God, Negroes are not in this fight alone. All truly democratic people of Texas and America will join us."

by Constantine Kavafis

Wearing amethyst studded bracelets
And sparkling emerald rings?
The barbarians are coming today,
Such objects dazzle barbarians.
Why don't the eloquent orators come as usual,
To declaim their speeches, to have their say?
The barbarians are coming today,
They become bored with eloquent orations.
Why this sudden sadness and upset,
How serious their faces have become!
Why have the streets and squares emptied so quick?
And all return so pensive to their homes?
It is dusk and the barbarians haven't come.
Some have returned from the frontier
To say barbarians no longer exist.
And now what shall we do without barbarians?
Those people were some sort of solution.

Philip Evergood.

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Forrest Wilson.

WE'LL MAKE YOUR BED

Mr. Lamb, the Lumber King, had taken unto himself a blushing bride at the age of sixty. "Boys," he said, "Mrs. Lamb wants a woodsy bed."

A Short Story by MERIDEL LE SUEUR

WE WERE down in the hollow. It was a sunny morning and Slim and me were trying to be quiet so as not to wake Mr. and Mrs. Lamb who were on their honeymoon. We had the frame of the woodsy bed all set up by ten o'clock and Slim kept looking at the modern log cabin of the Lamb's and making remarks that had me bent over with laughing.

Slim was a fast one before the war and it didn't slow him up none, and he was making jokes about old Mr. Lamb the Lumber King taking unto hisself a blushing bride at the age of sixty. No getting around it, Mrs. Lamb was a looker, a nice soft woman. All the things you go through, I'll swan your old lady gets to be like just something around; you like her, she's comfortable as an old shoe when she ain't snapping at you like a bull whip, but you don't feel it like you did at first and that's a fact.

"I hope mama doesn't come down here with our lunch. I told her we was raising old pines from the river bottom at ninety an hour."

"O Lord," Slim said, "don't worry, she'll be comin' round the mountain whistle time. No woman'd miss lookin' up at the windows of honeymooners even if they's old enough for a wooden

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kimono. She'll be steamin' down the hill and that's for certain and sure."

My old woman let out one of her tall whoops when I told her the truth at first that Slim and me got a job making all these little doodads for Mrs. Lamb, bird houses like little log cabins, cute as all get out, but as Slim said, "a hell of a piddlin' for two lumberjacks who in their day could blast a river and break up a log jam single-handed." First it was bad enough when we had to fix up the old outhouse which was of good mahogany and Mrs. Lamb wanted it oiled up swank and a moon and crescent carved on it, so she and friends on Sunday afternoon took pictures of the thing as if it was a huge joke or something. It beats all when you think my old woman has been after me day and night to get indoor plumbing so the girls could be raised like ladies.

We made a summer house over the river and that was when Mr. Lamb said, "Boys, Mrs. Lamb wants a woodsy bed now." I couldn't stand to tell the old lady and I made up the story about the dead heads. I couldn't stand the gaff at home any longer. My old lady barring none has got probably the longest, loudest, rip-snorting, rib-cracking sneer that they is anywhere on this green earth. It was bad enough when I told them about the woodsy bird houses and the flower bower. My old lady is lean as a whip snake and even if she has had eight kids on our old farm, four dead and four living, she's fast and quick and full of vinegar all right.

"Itty bitty bird houses," yelled the kids like a bunch of coyotes. "The champion, the birling champion, the fastest man to twirl a cant-hook, works up to making itsy bitsy beds for honey" —this being what Mr. Lamb calls his new bride. "Honey," says my wife, and the tone of it would make a hole in a pine log, "Honey," she says, "Oh! I want to bake my bread outdoors in an oven—oh, it is so picturesque—it is so woodsy—" And Elmer, the spitting image of his maw, begins to priss around saying in the high voice of Mrs. Lamb, "Oh, make me a little woodsy house hanging over the river. Mr. Lamb being an old lumber maggot and all. . . ." And the other kids, like magpies getting in line, begin to jibber —"Lumber maggot . . . lumber maggot."

"Good for you," says my old lady, bitter as lye. "So after workin' yer heart out forty years or maybe more in these woods, you work up to hunting little saplings for a woman that never bore a chick nor child. . . ."

I looked into my stew ashamed. "Well," I says, "this is hard times—hard to get work—a man ought to be glad. . . ."

"Glad," she explodes like stump dynamite, "glad!" And I don't want to look at her for a fact. I went out by the river and thought of the fine masts, growing straight into the sky, I helped in my time snake down to the river, down to the sea. The finest spars and masts that ever went to sea we tooken right out of here. It was a fine country then, with horse racing every Saturday at Stillwater.

"I AIN'T never stayed in bed this long in the morning, even the first night me and Anna was married," Slim said, looking at the honeymooners' windows.

"I guess a honeymoon is a honeymoon no matter what age you're at."

We had set our saw horses up far enough away from the window so as not to disturb them none. We had got pretty beech saplings from the woods. Slim and me, I guess, know every kind of wood there is being and growing in these woods. I remember some trees like they was people.

"When they get up," I says, "they're comin' out here and give us some good advice."

"The bastards," Slim says, "they better not come out here tellin' *me* anything about what to do with wood. They better not tell me how to make a bed."

"A woodsy bed," I says and he says with a snort, "Yeah, a blankety-blank woodsy bed." Slim has got quite a store of honeymoon jokes of one shade and another and him telling them all morning, while we was cutting the saplings for the posts, kind of got my dander up.

Then I saw her, dangerous and fiery like a flag on a battleship, coming down the hill with our lunch, tough and wiry, my old woman.

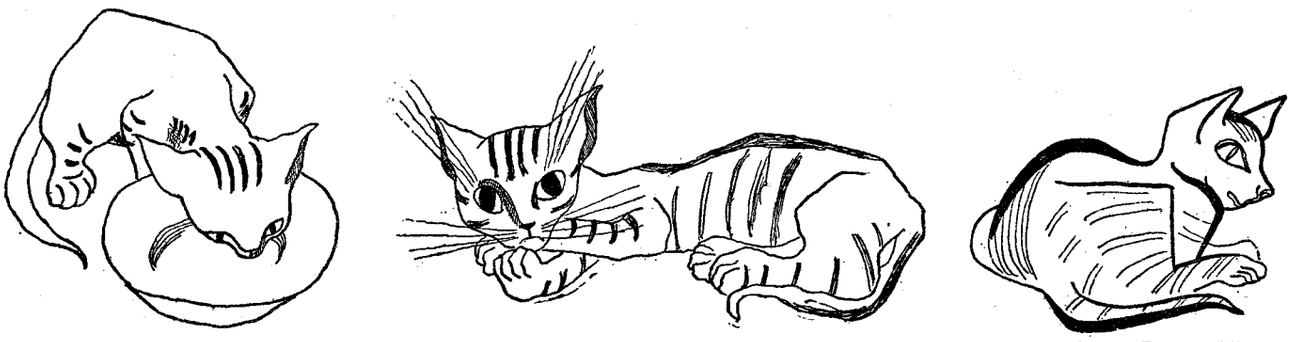
"Jiggers," Slim said, "there's the battle cry. Too late. . . . Prepare to meet thy God."

We pretended to be mighty busy and she bore down on us like a river full of logs let loose by thaw. I never was more scared. She just said "Well!" and stood there like a little snake looking dangerous out of the brush. "Well," she said again and I had rather a fine bull whip had curled lovingly around my middle. Slim was grinning, kind of sick-like, and pretending to measure the saplings carefully. "What now?"

I heard my voice break like a young fellow's and I thought the blood would burst my ears. "A bed," I said, hearing my voice squeak. She seemed to jump toward me. "A bed," she hissed.

"A woodsy bed," Slim said, and began to imitate Mr. Lamb, stroking a belly Slim surely didn't have since he got back from the war. "Honey wants a bed. She's got a dozen beds, some with silk, some with satin, but she's romantic so to speak—yes, Honey is romantic and she says being as how I'm a big lumber man—oh a big lumber man—" and here Slim batted his eyes in an awful way, winking and looking mighty fast and frisky and giving more meaning to it than the words seemed to, "Yes, a big lumber man and well Honey it looks like she wants a kind of woodsy bed. . . ."

This even knocked the wind out of



Forrest Wilson.

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Holson.

"I hear we're going to investigate Franco."

my old woman and I could see her mouth kind of start to form the words "a woodsy bed." Just then we heard a door slam and voices talking and a flash of color and there was Mr. and Mrs. Lamb looking in all the birds' nests to see if they had any birds and it made a kind of tickling fire come in my belly to see them. Mr. Lamb had his arm around her and she was a good full figure of a woman, with something floating around her more like a night-gown than anything else. And before I knew what I was doing I clapped my old woman into the outhouse, told her to be quiet and locked the door from the outside. I was back helping Slim before I started to think what I was doing and I could see Slim winking at me and we watched them out of the corner of our eyes as they came down the hill from the house looking into all the bird houses, Mrs. Lamb kind of floating in this thingumabob soft and clingly so I couldn't look at her straight. I thought I could see the terrible eye of my old lady looking out the outhouse moon Slim and I had carved.

I BEGIN to smell that whiff that comes from Mrs. Lamb when she moves and makes you dizzy. My old lady smells good too in a different way, kind of clean and soapy and of babies. Not a bad smell when you come down to it. But Mrs. Lamb smells like something else, I don't know what, kind of indecent—and seeing them and knowing my old woman was watching and Slim leering and winking at me a kind of flame kept licking up inside me that had some anger in it and something bitter as gall running sap deep, strong and secret.

"They're lookin'" Slim says low, "to see if they've caught any birds in their piddlin' little traps of houses. If I was a bird, I'd fly over and you know what I'd do——"

"Shut up," I says. They were coming down to us holding hands and old man Lamb kind of looking at her with mooning eyes and she's laughing and swinging his hand and stuff floating around her, all filled out a fine figure, and like she never had worn herself to a frazzle like my old lady. They are looking at the stuff that is coming up and she kicks the earth with the toe of her shoe which has a little fluff on it like the stuff around her neck. I know my old lady has got her eye peeled to the crescent moon and will be able to tell the kids all about it come evening.

It's like when they come down to us that we are like the birds or the stuff they have planted, or the woodsy bed, as if they owned us like a dog or a cow, and watching them I knew what my old lady felt. I felt it lick up my insides like a snake tongue.

I got to keep a straight face because I am facing them all the time and it is terrible and comical to see Slim's big eyes turn over in his face as he winks at me and I see in his face too a kind of drawn look as if the fast, hot blood was pouring out of him somewhere. They coming up slow now. Mr. Lamb says to us, "Hello, boys." A man used to managing has a way of speaking I suppose.

"How are you *Mr.* Lamb," Slim says eyeing down the board he has been planing and I try not to look at Mrs. Lamb because my wife will say I was looking at her all the time.

"Now," says Mr. Lamb, his pudgy hands over his paunch as if he had pride that his woman was a little foolish, "the little woman has changed her mind. She wants the color of the pagoda changed."

"What?" says Mrs. Lamb and I don't know if she is a little deaf or just doesn't listen. Mr. Lamb shouts out what he was telling us. "Oh, but yes," she says, "I don't want it yellow now. I will take all the color off."

"A hell of an idea," says Slim keeping on with his work, "should never paint a birch."

"What?" cries Mrs. Lamb, and everything she says she seems to jump and move in the stuff that floats around. "Nothing," Slim says and she begins to watch Slim's hands, tender as a woman's on anything that is made of wood. If Slim was blind as a bat he would still be a good carpenter. He can feel wood in his hands.

"The little woman has changed her

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mind," Mr. Lamb says, and I can hear my old lady telling the children about it at supper in his very words. "You know how it is with women."

We don't say nothing.

"What?" cries Mrs. Lamb again.

"About the yellow paint," Mr. Lamb says.

"Oh yes," she says. "What will take it off? I could do it myself."

"Oh, you better let them do it," says Mr. Lamb.

"What about sandpaper?"

Slim spits a gob into the sawdust. "You can't sandpaper a birch. "You'll have to get some lye."

"Lye," says Mrs. Lamb.

"Yes, lye," Slim says, taking a good straight look at her. "Something with bite to it."

She looks startled. "Something with bite to it," she says over again looking at Slim.

"Yes," he says impudent-like, I thought, so I got nervous and so did Mr. Lamb. "Yes, with bite in it. . . ."

Slim ignored Mr. Lamb. "Sandpaper won't do it," he said insolent like, looking right at her as if he looked her up and down.

"Oh no," says Mr. Lamb nervously, "something with bite to it. You boys get some lye, whatever is needed, at the store, charge it to me, get whatever is needed to fix up the little woman with what she wants."

"Yes sir," Slim says and Mrs. Lamb seems excited and begins to run around pointing here and there and it must be I imagined it that I could see that black snapping eye looking right out the crescent moon of the outhouse.

"Now," cries Mrs. Lamb, "I just bought two hundred dollars worth of grills and things. I am going to make an outdoor kitchen. They have such wonderful things now for roughing it."

"Two hundred bucks!" I said. I ain't seen a hundred bucks at once since the lumber went out.

"I am going to get back to simple things." She turns and clasps her hands and her fine hair seems to have fallen a little out of a net. "Yes, back to the simple life. That's what we must have."

"The simple life," Slim snorts, and Mr. Lamb gets more nervous.

"Well, how is it going to look, boys? How is it coming?" Mr. Lamb seems forcing himself to be hardy and gay. Slim don't say nothing so I says feeling foolish-like with the eye of my old woman glued on me like a vise. "O.K." I says, and felt foolish to hear my voice break again in a funny embarrassed way which makes me mad enough to pick up a sapling and lay around me like crazy.

Mrs. Lamb lets out little noises, touching the posts like a ring dove in mating time, fluttering around Slim, who keeps right on planing the board, the shavings falling around. Mr. Lamb says everything twice to Mrs. Lamb, who listens as if she was dreaming and then lets out a little cry as if she was astonished.

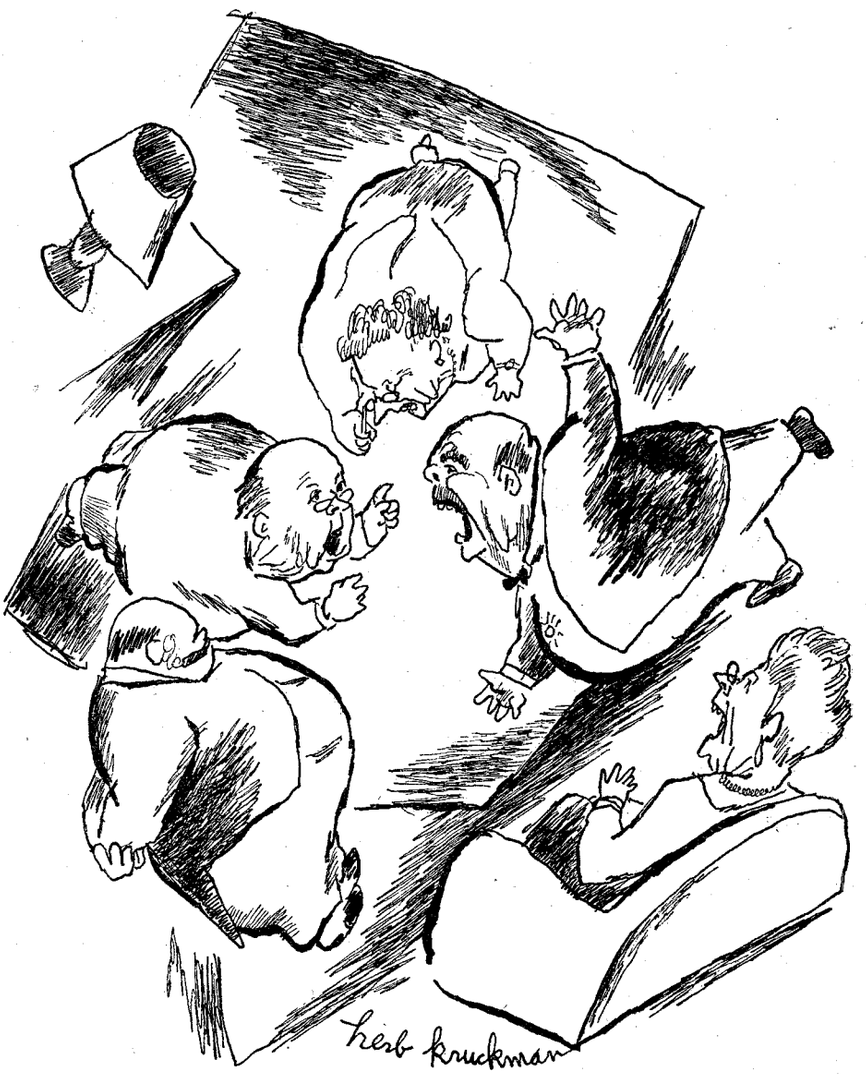
"Oh," she jumps and cries around us so you can feel what a fine figure of a woman she is, smiling at you with her painted ripe face. Even from where I am with all the smells of the morning and the fresh smell of the shavings, I can smell her. "Oh, you must have had a hard time finding these wonderful trees for the posts, all four just alike."

Slim doesn't peep so again I says foolishly, "Yes'm."

"They're just beautiful," she lows, "just beautiful." And she comes close to Slim, putting her hand on the saplings, and I can see the back of Slim's neck kind of swell and the back of his ears get red. He moves away, picks up a hammer and makes little nervous jabs like a woodpecker.

"Well," Mrs. Lamb laughs, "I don't understand how you are going to make it. Will you tell poor me about it? Squeezics says I'm the most helpless——"

"That's what she calls me," Mr. Lamb says nervously. I thought Slim was going to laugh right out but he



"I tell you Iran is played out! We'll have to dig up something else."

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kept on making little taps with his hammer as if everything was falling to pieces.

"Now will that be solid?" Mr. Lamb says, picking up one of the posts. Slim takes the wood away from him. "Solid as a tree," Slim says, and keeps tapping with his hammer. Mr. Lamb picks up another one and feels it with his hands and Slim takes the log away from him and puts it back on the saw buck. "Strong enough," Slim says, looking at Mr. Lamb. A slow, yellow color seems to come over Mr. Lamb's bald head and then it gets very white.

"It must be strong," Mrs. Lamb says, her eyes wide, looking at Slim.

"Those are A-1 birch saplings," Slim says, taking another one out of Mr. Lamb's paws. "They're strong as God made them and you don't want them any stronger than that."

"Well, it wants to be solid," comes back Mr. Lamb, and his mouth looks grim and he picks up the log from the saw buck.

"It will be all right for you," Slim says.

"I'll tell you how I want it," Mr. Lamb says and Slim takes the marked sapling out of his hand and this time Mr. Lamb doesn't pick it up again.

"I'll tell you how we're makin' it," Slim says. If you know Slim you know this is just before he gets mad and tosses everything out the window. It's a good thing they don't know Slim the way I do. Then he says, "We'll show you how it'll be." So him and me set the bed up. They can see what it will be like and he is holding one side and I am holding the other side, and I don't know what he is up to. His nose is kind of pinched and white. I know this is a bad sign.

There is the framework and we're holding it up and Mr. Lamb looks very wise and says "Mmmmmm." Mrs. Lamb looks like she ain't seeing anything but Slim and she moved closer to him. "Oh yes," she said and I saw her put her hand on Slim's arm and I saw the line in his jaw drawn tight. He moved away from her, and brazen, she followed him standing close, and we all looked at the damn bed. "And then," says Slim, biting his words off sharp, "we'll put her in the river and let her soak. . . ."

"Oh will you do that?" Mrs. Lamb says, looking bold at Slim, and I feel ashamed. I just look down at my hands holding the bed and I feel ashamed, and ashamed my wife is watching from the outhouse.

"Now I understand it," Mr. Lamb says and Slim looks at him as if he didn't know how to button up his pants.

"How will you put it together?" Mrs. Lamb cries and there is something like the way she smells in her voice. "This is too, too wonderful. My friends will be crazy about it. You might get a lot of work." Her eyes are big and bold on Slim. "You might get a good deal of work because if this is a success, all my friends might want to have woodsy beds. Just think of it. . . ."

Refregier.

It was that did it. "I'm making no more woodsy beds," Slim said. He pulled away from her and the framework fell to the ground.

"How will you put it together so it won't show?" Mr. Lamb said very important-like as if he knew all about it.

"Screw it," Slim said.

"What?" cried Mrs. Lamb.

"Oh yes," Slim says as big as life, the white line showing along his jaw, "We'll have to screw it."

Mr. Lamb came to and shouted at Mrs. Lamb, "He says they will have to screw it."

"Oh yes," Mrs. Lamb said kind of lazy, her eyes bigger than ever.

"It won't hurt the wood none," Slim says, "won't hurt a thing."

"Oh certainly," Mr. Lamb says too loudly.

I feel good for the first time, like a big spurt of laughter and strength came into my stomach. . . .

"Oh but yes," cries Mrs. Lamb. "How wonderful. I understand."

"Yes," Slim says and I knew now he was going to do something for sure and certain. "You better understand."

"Come in, honey," Mr. Lamb says. "Breakfast I am sure is ready. All right boys, go ahead. Go right ahead. Get whatever you want. Charge it to me. You know what to do. I'll leave it to you. Get whatever you want."

Slim stood with his hands clenched big as tree bolls. Mr. and Mrs. Lamb went up to their house and Mrs. Lamb looked back. "The bitch," Slim said, loud. He picked up the framework of the bed and holding it above his head, with the heinie still from the Army, he walked to the edge of the bluff. Quick as a flicker my old woman darted out of the outhouse and she picked up the saplings and I saw her running after him, her body like a bat out of hell, for all the hate and sorrow of her life. And I felt this flick of strength up my neck and love for that strong tough flicker of a woman. I stood beside Slim laughing and throwing the last birch into the river. I am laughing so that Mr. and Mrs. Lamb turned at their house startled and frightened. "Charge it to me. Get whatever you want. You know what to do."

And my old woman began to laugh and she slammed me on the back and I saw her black whippersnapper eyes, looking at me again, in the same harness, the good bit in our mouth, together again. "Oh an outdoor oven," she cried, flouncing like a witch, and Slim and I looked at her bitter strength like a fine aged wood. "Oh a woodsy bed," she cried.

I haven't shouted across the river like that for a hell of a time. I opened my mouth and bellowed and it went down deep and came out strong, "We'll make your goddamned bed. . . ."

And it struck the rocks across and echoed back as if we had friends across the river—we'll make your bed —we'll make your bed.

Our laughter echoed back too, striking, emerging in air pockets, on wind currents until all the hills and old trees left rotting on the river bottom took it up, shook it out, beat it up and threw it back.

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LERNER'S LAMENT

An Editorial by A. B. MAGIL

LAST week's newspapers published a photo of President Truman which is undoubtedly one for the archives. It shows the President dressed in a leather naval coat and a cap pulled down over his eyes, striding determinedly across the deck of the aircraft carrier *Franklin D. Roosevelt*. It is not a kind portrait of the President. It invests him with all the dignity of the chief protagonist in a game of cops and robbers. Yet it isn't really unjust. For in a sense Harry S. Truman has for over a year been playing at being something he manifestly is not: the biggest man in the United States. And it is quite in character that he should be fiddling in Chesapeake Bay with the murderous toys of war while OPA burns.

No one begrudges the President of the United States an occasional vacation. There are some who might even be willing to extend it indefinitely. But this particular vacation only underlines that evasion of conflict with the paladins of reaction which is a distinguishing feature of the Truman domestic policy.

The people of the United States would also like a vacation—a vacation from the war jitters which the administration foreign policy has brought into every home, a vacation from the cold pogrom which the House action in gutting OPA threatens to inflict on all of us.

There is no mistaking who cracked the whip on this issue. For weeks the National Association of Manufacturers has been waging war against price control. The other day the NAM president admitted that the organization spent nearly $400,000 on its campaign—no doubt only a fraction of what big business has been shelling out in its drive to rob the people of billions through ballooning prices. The Southern industrial and planting interests have also been lusting for OPA's scalp. Yet Congressional mail and every national poll have shown a preponderant majority for maintaining price control intact. Clearly, in the House vote on this, as on so many other critical issues, our vaunted two-party system reveals itself as the single Janus-faced party of big capital, riding herd on the needs and desires of the vast majority of the nation.

There is a naked quality in the House assault on price control which has the troubadors of capitalist democracy worried. "If the behavior of Congress is a sample of the American democratic system in action," laments Max Lerner in *PM* (April 23), "what sort of impression are we making in the struggle to win the people of the world over to the democratic system?" Lerner cites other dismal examples of "the American democratic system in action": the real estate lobby's blockade of housing legislation, the evisceration of the full employment bill, the passage of the Case anti-labor bill, etc.

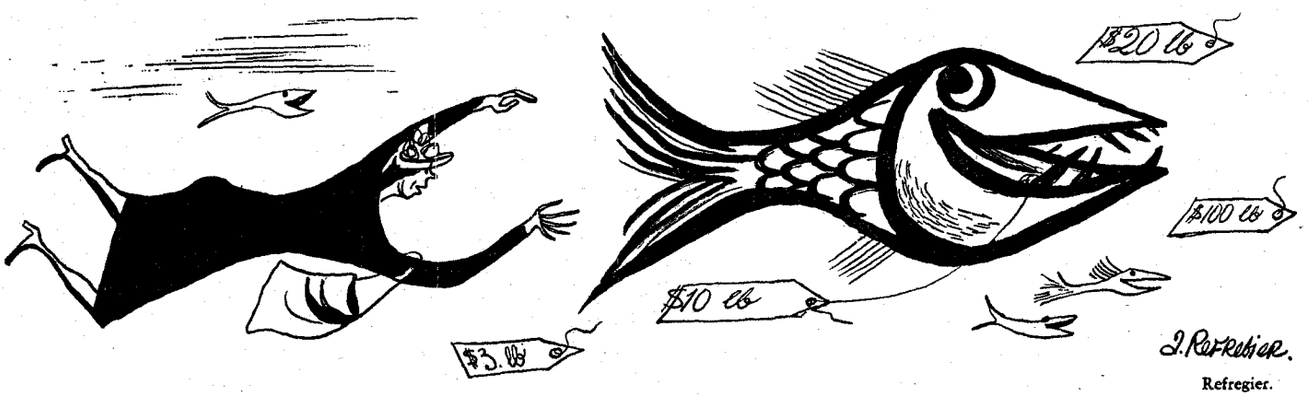
Lerner asks a very pertinent question. Yes, what kind of impression does a system make which talks democracy and acts plutocracy? It is too bad that Lerner's courage gets exhausted at this point and he runs away from the answer. Nor does it make the best of the worst when he goes out of his way to throw "democratic" mud at the country whose system in action is making quite a different impression among the people of the world. It would seem rather difficult to write an anti-Soviet editorial in defense of the OPA, but this is not the first time that Max Lerner has sought truth and wisdom by standing himself and logic on the head.

There is the convenient, if corny, stage-prop: the anonymous correspondent—this time, Lerner tells us, "one of the more intelligent of our nationally syndicated columnists." "He argues," Lerner writes, "that we must find some way of stopping the Soviet expansion, but that we can't do it by diplomacy alone. We can't 'stop' Russia, he urges soberly, unless we are prepared to help remove the conditions of backwardness and desolation all over the world which invite the Soviet system to move in and clean them up." "I go along on that," adds Lerner.

THE conception of the Soviet system as moving in all over the world is a crude caricature of Soviet foreign policy painted (in oil?) by the American and British imperialist marauders who have already moved in on territory thousands of miles from their shores and want to move farther. Within this distortion, however, there is an important fundamental truth: that the Soviet system—socialism—is the enemy of "conditions of backwardness and desolation."

But this oblique admission serves Lerner merely as an excuse for de-

(*Continued on page* 20)



Refregier.

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"Priming" tobacco. Sketched in Johnson County, N. C., by Charles Keller.

TOBACCO ROAD, UNION STYLE

The odds were very great, but the American Tobacco Company strikers, Negro and white united, stood their ground and won. How they did it.

By KARL KORSTAD

THE strike of the 2500 women in Philadelphia, Trenton and Charleston, S. C., against the American Tobacco Company is over. The women didn't get an 18½¢ raise. They didn't get a blanket contract covering all three plants and they didn't break the North-South wage differential. They settled for an eight cent an hour raise in Charleston and for a little more than that in the Northern cities. But they won a victory, an important victory.

They were fighting one of the most powerful and profitable of America's giant corporations. Most of them were women, half of them Southerners, many of them Negroes and all of them low-paid, tired and with no savings on which to fall back. Yet in the face of these tremendous odds, they stood together, Negro and white, North and South, and they fought. And finally the last week in March, almost six months after the strike began, the company officials left their Fifth Avenue offices, journeyed down to Charleston, met with the women there across the bargaining table, came to terms and signed a contract with the Food, Tobacco, Agricultural and Allied Workers, CIO.

How were they able to do it? Well, first of all—and they would be the first to admit it—because enough of their fellow workers, outraged over their story, stopped buying and smoking Lucky Strike and Pall Mall cigarettes.

The National Maritime Union took these brands off their ships. Many other CIO workers pulled them from the vending machines in their plants. Scores of youth and progressive organizations all over the country took group action. And the justifiable anger of these millions of men and women, reflected in the tremendous loss of cigarette sales, was finally more than even the powerful American Tobacco Company could bear.

There were many people who did more, too. They sent money. Every week the food and tobacco workers in Winston-Salem, N. C. and in Norfolk and Suffolk in Virginia sent part of their pay checks.

The emergency committee organized by Southern progressives in Washington raised $4,000 in a mailing of

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Joseph Hirsch.

only 6,000 letters. A woman from Illinois, vacationing in the North Carolina mountains, sent $500. Students at Taladega College in Alabama sent along quarters and dollars; folded, worn dollar bills came from poor farmers in Georgia and Tennessee. Teachers at the University of Wisconsin and at Middlebury in Vermont, the labor class of the Walt Whitman school in Newark, and businessmen and doctors and lawyers and writers in New York and Atlanta and Chicago and New Orleans and San Francisco and in every large city in the nation, all sent money and letters of encouragement.

Not that there was a lot of money, because there wasn't. Five dollars was the usual weekly relief check. But it helped; and it helped, too, for the strikers to know that there were so many people, people whom they hadn't known existed before the letters came, who were outraged at the existence in our nation of a sweatshop which netted its owners $20,000,000 every year.

THE most important factor of all, of course, was these women's own determination and courage. Six months is a long time to walk a picket line. It means getting up early in the morning, every morning, no matter what the weather. And theirs was a long six months, a six months of few outward developments. Until the last few weeks the company wouldn't even agree to talk with them. In Charleston there was only one negotiation session, that at the end, the one that brought the final agreement.

It took patience and understanding, too. The women in Trenton and Philadelphia refused the company's first offers to settle with them and leave their Southern sisters out by themselves. Their answer to that one was always the same, "You'll have to settle with all or none," even when they had been going without pay for weeks longer than they had ever thought they could.

In Charleston it took a different kind of understanding. Of their twelve hundred, nine hundred were Negro and three hundred were white, and they all had to break through the false mistrusts and fears of their years of training before they could forge the unity that was so necessary.

Eight months before the strike, they had hardly begun. As a matter of fact, not until the strike itself was the unity finally welded. Before that Monday noon, October 22, when the strike began, they had never held a mixed, non-segregated membership meeting. But that Monday they walked out together and met together in a Negro USO and then unanimously decided to continue meeting together as a regular thing. It was a good thing and a wise thing that they did, for without it, it is doubtful that they would have been able to endure.

Their leaders, fortunately, had known this and during the months preceding the strike they had carefully and patiently prepared the women, Negro and white alike. Then, when it finally happened, they made certain that it was fully understood just how important this new unity was, how important and how historic it was that they had been able to crash through the walls of segregation which had been keeping them apart.

Not only was this unity a contributing factor to their victory, it was also a part of that victory itself, because during the months of the strike they were able to teach the people of Charleston some lessons in racial understanding and interracial respect which will undoubtedly eventually change the city's entire pattern of living.

THE strike was only a few weeks old when the local police arrested a Negro girl on the picket line because she swore when a white scab mechanic spit on her leg. It should have been an open-and-shut case, according to the usual practice. The police would testify that she had "disturbed the peace." There would only be her word against theirs. She would be fined or given a sentence and the case would be closed. But that Monday morning when she appeared in court, two of her white sisters came with her and after the arresting policeman had made his charges, they gave him the lie.

One of them said, "I saw that scab spit on the sister's leg and she only swore once. If he had done it to me, I'd have done more than swear." The judge was forced to agree. He released the girl on insufficient charges. And Charleston had heard a new vocabulary, evidence of a new understanding. "Scab" for the white mechanic, "sister" for the Negro girl!

Again, contributing to their victory and at the same time a part of it, was the way they were able in those six

Keller.

Making up "hands."

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months to bring the story of the New South they were beginning to see, to literally hundreds of Charleston's citizens who otherwise might never have heard the story. Before the strike, along with the NMU, the Citizens' Political Action Committee and the Cosmopolitan Civic League, a progressive Negro organization, they had planned a series of lectures on the New South by five of the South's outstanding progressives. And in spite of the strike they went ahead and carried the series through successfully.

The meetings, mixed and non-segregated, were held in a large Negro church. They were open to the public. Starting in November and monthly after that, they heard Aubrey Williams, publisher of the *Southern Farmer*, Clifford J. Durr of the Federal Communications Commission, Dr. Charles S. Johnson of Fisk University, Clark Foreman of the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, and the Reverend Kelly Barnett, pastor of the Baptist Church in Chapel Hill, N. C. At Dr. Johnson's lecture, the one which drew the largest crowd, there was an audience of more than a thousand. Two hundred and fifty were white and at least a hundred of those were merchants and housewives, teachers and librarians—people not connected with the union, people interested in meeting where they and anyone and everyone concerned with building a new South could hear what some of the South's own progressives had to say about the matter. The lecture series culminated with the formation of a committee for Charleston of the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, eighty strong at its first meeting.

Keller.

"Looping."

This, too, has become an integral part of the changing Charleston which these women in their struggle helped speed into motion. This, too, was a part of their victory.

Not that Charleston was or is a Stamford. It wasn't and isn't. About thirty-five mechanics, still suckers for the "don't join a Negro union" and "let's go hunting with the boss" line, stayed in the plant and did all they could to help the company break the strike. They and fifty or more of the white women, still trying not to be *workers*, had stayed out of the union. They scabbed from the beginning.

And before the end more than 800—only a few of them union members who had walked out—were back in the plant. Five or six hundred of those were Negroes, most of them uneducated and unaware of the crime they and the others were committing against the working people of the South. Some few who knew better were unable to withstand the economic and social pressures brought to bear upon them.

THE role played by the retail merchants was even less to be admired. Although many of them probably agreed with the letters the union sent them, telling them the obvious fact that their welfare was unalterably dependent upon the welfare of the city's workers who were also their customers, they were never able to take any sort of action in the face of the city administration's opposition, as evidenced by the strike-breaking tactics of the local police and the opposition of the newspapers and the Chamber of Commerce.

Many of the merchants and some of the professional men and women of the city were sympathetic, and many of them went so far as to attend the lectures, but not one dared to help openly. Not a single voice among them made a single public statement in the women's defense, or in defense of the civil liberties violated when the city police enforced an injunction against them to stop them from singing on the picket lines. Not a single one of them openly, publicly rose to condemn the Charleston sweatshop for the great outrage against decency that it was and is. Except for the Negro Ministerial Alliance, the progressive Negro civic groups and the NMU—the Central Labor Council, AFL, and the 5,000 men it represents stood by and watched—these women fought the battle alone.

Keller.

"Handing up," curing barn.

During March, as these women entered the final stages of their struggle, the CIO announced that a $1,000,000 organizing drive would be launched in the South. It was welcome news to these women and to the thousands of other workers in the South, all of whom are struggling to throw off the economic chains which bind them.

There is a great danger in the South. There is also a great hope. A strong, young, militant progresive movement is already under way, and where its leaders are taking a clearly progressive and uncompromising stand on the racial question and where they are soliciting the help of the South's large, unorganized and heretofore non-vocal and disenfranchised middle-class, they are making rapid headway.

If the women of Charleston had been as successful in handling the second of these problems as they were in building their Negro-white unity, they could have won an even greater victory and with much less suffering. That they were able to do what they did, in spite of that fact, only justifies the belief that even though the reactionaries and the native fascists may pour millions of dollars into the coming struggle for the South, the people of the South, in the end, no matter what, will win.

The many who are betting now that it cannot happen will be surprised, as they always are when the people, against seemingly insuperable odds, win a victory. It was so in Charleston and in the Fifth Avenue offices of the American Tobacco Company. It is always so to those who don't know the people and the strength that is in them.

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TOWARD PEOPLE'S STANDARDS IN ART

"Before art can be wholly a weapon for us we must understand art, both the art of the people and the art created and used by their enemies."

By HOWARD FAST

IN WHAT is certainly one of the most wonderful moral tales ever conceived, the weavers come to the vain king—he with such a passion for clothes—and tell him that they can create a suit such as never existed before. Not only will the clothes be beautiful, but they will have the added virtue of being invisible to fools and those unfit for the positions they hold. You know the story, how they weave for weeks with invisible thread, sew invisible cloth, and finally dress the king in invisible clothes; and how no one dares admit he cannot see the clothes—for fear of being considered either a fool or unfit for his position—until a little child among the crowds, who watch the naked king parade, pipes up: "But the king has no clothes on!"

That child was a materialist, as so many children are, and he had not yet learned how to negate the reasonable conclusion and to disprove the evidence of his eyes. But what are we to say of the hundreds who had admired and praised the clothes which were not there? Were they lying, or were they not performing an act which has become second nature in our society? For is it not second nature in this society to see what is not present, to reason in any fashion but logically?

The basis of Marxism is the philosophy of dialectical and historical materialism. A Marxist, in bourgeois society, is an iconoclast, an image breaker. He looks at life sanely and perceptibly, seeing things as they are. Very often his reaction must be as naive and as to the point as the reaction of the little child who saw that the king was naked—and certainly those subjective elements which prevented the adults present from speaking must not be a part of Marxist criticism.

With this point of view in mind, how is it that when we come to the realm of art we so often cast science aside and indulge in the worst idealistic and mystical concepts? One must ask whether or not art has any connection with life—with the science of life—with the elements and the struggles of life. If it has, then it is susceptible to a materialist approach. On the other hand, if only idealism could cope with art, it would be hopeless to pursue a Marxist inquiry.

Now in a materialist approach toward art, there must be a consideration of worth and achievement, the sum of which is the artistic product itself. For example, a book may be referred to as a work of art, but that is a special title and distinction which we give to a special book. How do we make this distinction? What is art and what is not art? If we line up in a row a hundred books, starting with a very bad one and ending with a very good one, where precisely along that line should a book become a work of art?

The answer is determined by our standards. All human beings have standards of some sort; and all human beings employ standards of criticism daily. But that is not to say that all standards of all people are equally valid. When we use our standards we may use them most superficially, simply deciding that a book is giving us pleasure, or that a book has annoyed us, or bored us. On the other hand, we may use our standards with far more scientific exactness and far more artistic inquiry. When so doing, we would expect to arrive at some real appraisal of the work and not merely an offhand opinion.

As I said before, different people have different standards. But whatever the standards, they are created by certain objective factors. In the largest sense, standards in art are determined by all factors in a society, but most basically by the economic system and the class structure.

I think it would be a grave error of thinking ever to approach art with the premise that standards are immutable. Standards are as mutable as society itself. And if one accepts the factor of change at all, one must extend that factor to the field of art.

Now, though Marxists will accept, in historical terms, the proposition that the only permanent factor in life is the factor of change itself, many of them hesitate to extend that principle to values of art. They challenge the mutability of standards with the contention of eternal verities; but how can a dialectical materialist even conceive of such a thing as an eternal verity or eternal value?

IN HIS work on dialectical materialism, Stalin says: "There are different kinds of social ideas and theories. There are old ideas and theories which have outlived their day and serve the interests of the moribund forces of society. Their significance lies in the fact that they hamper the development, the progress of society. Then there are new and advanced ideas and theories which serve the interests of the advanced forces of society. Their significance lies in the fact that they facilitate the development, the progress of society; and their significance is the greater the more accurately they reflect the needs of development of the material life of society."

One may substitute for "social ideas" the word "standards"—for actually standards are in a very real sense a method of applying social ideas and theories. If you make that substitution, you can paraphrase Stalin at least to this extent:

"There are old standards which have outlived their day and which serve the interest of the moribund forces of society. Their significance lies in that they hamper the development, the progress of society. Then there are new and advanced standards which serve the interests of the advanced forces of society."

Stalin also says: "New social ideas and theories arise precisely because they are necessary to society, because it is impossible to carry out the urgent task of development of the material life of society without their organizing, mobilizing and transforming action."

Once again, by substituting the

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word "standards" for "ideas and theories," we have further indication that any immutable approach is dangerous and incorrect.

However, the fact that standards are not eternal, and the necessity for us to be suspicious of standards put forth today by enemies of progress does not mean that art has no objective reality. Nor does it mean that from one generation to another this objective reality changes. We recognize that there are not only objective truths but that the circumstances of nature have a reality apart from ourselves and apart from our subjective approach; if we do not recognize this, we would indeed be idealists. Therefore, in the light of the above, one must keep in mind that such great works of literature as the *Odyssey* of Homer, the Bible, and the plays of Shakespeare, to take only three examples, are objectively splendid works of art, and the probability is that, notwithstanding changes brought about by the evolution of society, they will be continued to be considered as such. They are great because the artists who produced them were great, and because those artists expressed in the highest degree possible the objective reality of their time, and because they interpreted that reality in a masterly fashion.

Indeed, one may go so far as to say that the full stature of these three works, and many, many others, will only be appreciated and understood when artistic standards have wholly emerged from the mire in which they are at present—and when thousands of people can apply healthy people's standards to an understanding of those works of art and of the historical context in which they were created.

In other words, although we must accept the fact that there are no immutable and eternal standards, we must also accept the fact that, at various periods in the evolution of society, beautiful objects and fine works of literature were created whose worth is not lessened but rather more fully understood by the transition and development of standards. To reexamine the decadent standards of today is not to cast aside or to disparage the artistic beauty of yesterday.

I said before that the basic factor in the creation of artistic standards is the economic system and the class structure of society. Let me give a more or less obvious example, taken from current trends in publishing. There has been a large flow of capital into twenty-five-cent book publishing. This has increased book readers by the millions. At the same time, because cheap escapist fiction operates as an opiate, the mean artistic level of these reprints sinks steadily lower and lower, and because millions of the people read them, the literary standards of these millions are debased.

Of course one must take into consideration the fact that, before the first twenty-five-cent reprint was sold, a hundred years of capitalism robbed the American masses of many of the elements which go to make high literary standards. The most important element in the creation of high literary standards is a philosophy of life which has an approach to the objective truth. But the philosophy of life fed to the American masses by the ruling class of this country, historically and currently, is a philosophy which obscures the truth, which seeks to prevent the people from ever discovering the truth, which presents to the people the shiny interior of Hollywood sets as the face of America, and the Hearst newspapers as the face of the world.

But if the standards of the masses have been corrupted and are thereby low and capable of even further corruption, what shall we say of the standards of the literary esthetes who rule the highest levels of our "modern culture?" I think the best one can say is that in most cases they have no standards at all. Their approach to art has taken on all the aspects of a retreat from life, and avoiding life as carefully as they do, they have a mortal fear of putting standards into operation.

They are at a point now where they are entranced by sound. They worship style. Like children, they cavort at cunning phraseology, and their idea of a high intellectual achievement, as practiced for example on "Information Please," is the creation of a second-rate pun. They have adopted a canting and formalized literary phraseology, and they are endowing it with a sacredness very like the ritual of a church. They delight in the resultant confusion because confusion does not place upon them the responsibility of sifting facts for the truth. They are enraged if, perchance, progressive critics should point out that Swinburne wrote revolutionary odes; they value only that part of Swinburne which is sound without meaning, and they value Shelley that way, and Keats too.

One cannot deny that these critical czars have vast material means at their disposal. Each week they coin hundreds of thousands of words of so-called criticism, and with that criticism they establish their own hierarchy of the

This Week's Rankest

"Bottoms up—and prices, too!"—Senator Rankest.

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great, both in practitioners of art and in works of art.

But are their great the people's heroes? Are we Marxists, if, like a herd of sheep, we adopt the attitude of the folk who were silent at the sight of the naked king? Must we fear to express an opinion because we would thereby be considered fools or unfit for the positions we occupy?

I think not. Revisionism in politics taught us a priceless lesson—that the duty of the Marxist to constantly re-examine and reevaluate is a duty he cannot evade. Revisionism in art was brought closely home to us by the hot controversy around Albert Maltz's article. And there, too, I believe, it became apparent that we had neglected the injunction of reexamination placed upon us by our science.

We have accepted too uncritically too many bourgeois idols. In the recent controversy, one fact expressed, but never questioned, was the worth of James T. Farrell's *Studs Lonigan* trilogy. Like medievalists, we argued a fantastic notion—whether or not a Trotskyite could create a great work of art—instead of doing what it was incumbent upon us to do as Marxists—going to the work of Trotskyites and reexamining it and reevaluating it.

We are in a new period. We face new tasks, many of them graver than any of the tasks we have faced in the past. Old judgments are only sound when we have tested them and, as artists, we must begin anew to test and to appraise.

It is not enough for us to point out that Henry James was brought forward by certain elements for their own purposes. We must go to the works of Henry James and bring to them a Marxist evaluation, and discover why he is being used by the Trotskyites, why Dostoievsky is being used by them, why Isherwood and Evelyn Waugh are current heroes of a certain literary set. It is not enough to call Koestler names. We must analyze him, and take him apart so thoroughly that the rottenness of the whole fabric of his work is revealed.

There must be no mystical carpet upon which we dare not tread. We must get over this notion of thinking that art is a sacred region wherein we cannot act as materialists. Such an approach toward art is a philistine approach. The setting of art apart from life is a philistine action. And if there are philistine elements among American Marxists, as undoubtedly there are, these are not due to a preoccupation with art but rather to a separation from art, and thereby a lack of understanding of the role of art and the role of artists.

It is no easy thing to be a dialectical materialist. It means that one sets his face against the blackest curtain of deception this world ever knew. The materialist thinks differently from the idealists and the mystics. He sees the world differently. He believes in the working class, and the strength and the vitality of the working class, and he believes in the historical role of the working class in leading the people to socialism. He believes in the Soviet Union, and he believes in socialism. And, most of all, he believes in people, in the human being.

Through the very nature of his belief, the materialist faces a great contradiction when he approaches art. It is true that, under socialism, most of the material values of capitalism, such as housing, cars and refrigerators, will be preserved and used, and those material values would not be so different under socialism; they would simply be extended to ever wider areas of the population. In the realm of art and ideas, however, a far greater replacement of the old by the new would take place. However, the art of former decades will not be destroyed. The best of it will be understood and used.

Yet we today, in the midst of the struggle, must not forget that the bulk of modern writing is not created by the working class or by friends of the working class. We very often have reason to remember that much of it is created by enemies of the people, enemies of progress, enemies of all that we believe in, and by and large those enemies control the critical standards of today.

Are their standards our standards? Can they ever wholly be our standards? Today, our standards and their standards occasionally will coincide—on a Walt Whitman, for example. But what was the attitude of those people toward Walt Whitman in his day, during his life? They attacked him and slandered him, and even today, you cannot read critical journals without finding regular attacks on Whitman, supercilious and snide commentaries on Whitman, and scholarly investigations of the "dubious worth" of Whitman.

Did these makers of standards approve of *Uncle Tom's Cabin?* Did they consider Vachel Lindsay a poet of any consequence? Did they not malign Dreiser and say that he was a buffoon presuming to art? Did they not condemn Jack London to the hall of mediocrity? Did they not fairly successfully expunge Frank Norris from our literary memory? Did they not deride Upton Sinclair, the early Sinclair whose socialist novels were so magnificent? Do they not, to this day, place a blanket denial on the literary worth of most of the contemporary Russian novelists?

What is their attitude toward the social writer of today? What will be their attitude toward the social novelists of tomorrow?

We cannot depend on them, on their concept of artistic truth or worth, on their emasculated standards. Marxists cannot pursue art in terms of sound or form alone. We must approach art with open eyes. We must approach it freshly, and we must no longer fear it. Before art can be wholly a weapon for us we must understand art, both the art of the people and the art which the enemies of the people create and use in one fashion or another to keep the people in subjugation. And, so long as we confuse these two, the people's art and the art created by the enemies of the people, so long as we bow to the decadents, to the mystics, to the cheap literary frauds, art will not be the weapon we want it to be, and the great people's art, which is an American promise to the world, will not come into being.

Art is part of life; it is the highest reflection of life, the noblest reflection of life. The art we embrace comes from the people and, at the same time, it is a gift to the people. The people are not grateful for gifts from fascists and other enemies of mankind. Such gifts are not art by our standards. The people take no profit from such gifts. Only death or the seeds of death are sown by such gifts. Even as the people must some day destroy the last seeds of fascism, so must they reject "art" which leads away from life and toward stagnation.

And when they do so, a new art will emerge, a people's art, judged by people's standards.

This article was one of the papers read at the "Art as a Weapon" symposium held on April 18 at Manhattan Center in New York.

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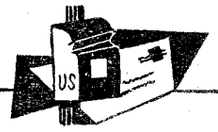

Congratulations to the New NM!

I've just finished reading the April 23 issue of the magazine and I wish to offer my congratulations. It's a fine beginning; keep it up. Let's hope you can even top yourself.

It seems to me that at the moment there's nothing more important than the type of cultural magazine you plan. If successful, it can't help but win the respect of even those who oppose your views. More importantly, it will command the attention of the young writers and artists coming over the horizon.

ARNAUD D'USSEAU.

New York.

GREETINGS to the "new" NEW MASSES, the first number of which is recently off the press. The appearance of the magazine in its new composition marks an important turning point in its long and vital history. It expresses the magazine's new role as a fighter for an American people's culture. NM will now be more effective than ever in helping weld the unity of professional and white collar workers with the organized labor movement and in providing its readers with a Marxist approach, not only to political issues, but to problems of literature, art, theater, motion pictures and oher fields of cultural activity.

The "new" NM will help to fill a gap that has long existed in the progressive movement. The widespread interest in the recent controversy over the Maltz article, and the overflow attendance at the recent big "Art As a Weapon" meeting at Manhattan Center, show the tremendous possibilities that exist for NM to give leadership in building a great cultural people's movement.

Now the task is to crystallize this potential support into actual support in building NM. This can be done if the work is gone at with determination. The possibilities are now at hand for building NM into a powerful voice in the people's struggle against reaction. Let us help realize these possibilities.

WILLIAM Z. FOSTER.

New York.

I READ the first issue of the new NEW MASSES with something of the same kind of pride and dignity I felt when my kid was born. You have got hold of a large hunk of America in motion. The range—all the way from Paul Bunyan to Rankin, to a Negro GI—caught the long scope, the good and evil, the life and death and color of the nation. The values that went into that issue were a level and a plumb-line for the beginning of building a people's magazine.

MILLARD LAMPELL.

New York.

THE new NEW MASSES is about the most exciting thing to come along in a long while. I'm not kidding when I say that it can't miss becoming the hottest thing around. In fact, I'm so hot about it, I'm even going to pledge ten subs from among hitherto non-readers. And please don't delay sending me this week's issue.

NAT LOW.

Westchester.

Touche!

TO NEW MASSES: You want our ideas about the NEW MASSES. Well, here is mine, and it is a squawk in the form of a question: Why is NM almost completely devoid of humor?

As the lyricist is convinced that lyrical poetry is the most sublime of all the art forms (in which he pours out the suffering of his own soul), so, I feel, is NM prostrate in an ever-growing introversion, which at times approaches morbidity.

I will admit that anybody writing about this sad world of necessity must be serious if he confines himself to direct reporting. But often a witty, healthy satire would do more good than a positive criticism.

With the exception of an occasional subtle cartoon, laughter is banned from the dour pages of NM. Even good old Gropper, the world's greatest, has a ponderous tread. Your articles are well written and command respect. Much enlightenment on timely subjects is given. And yet! Why is it that after he has read NM from cover to cover, a fellow must put it away with a heavy heart, when the intention of NM obviously was to give moral strength and inspire to fight?

Would it not be possible to shake a few cheerful thoughts over this solid, social mess of pottage? I like your keen, competent writers, but I want a well-balanced meal, or I shall end up with mental dyspepsia.

I am saying this because I love you and because, dammit, I want to keep on loving you!

FRODE N. DANN.

Los Angeles.

Some Suggestions

TO NEW MASSES: The first number of the improved NM gave me a great deal of pleasure, but let me offer some constructive criticism:

In his article "Elements of a People's Cultural Policy," William Z. Foster tells how in antiquity art was used by the ruling classes to strengthen their regimes by impressing the slaves with their power and divine rights. I think a present-day outgrowth of this practice is the contemporary worship of sophistication. The capitalist class, not having any claims of heavenly rights to dominate the masses, must find another reason for their superiority. This they have found in the myth of intellectual superiority. They say that they have greater appreciation and understanding of the arts and sciences than the rest of humanity.

This has given rise to the intellectual as distinct from the so-called ordinary people. And of course not everyone is initiated into their circles. It is only the sophisticates, the worldly-wise who can break into the select group. Society is saturated with all kinds of exclusive clubs of snobs. And through books, on the radio, in the press and in the movies the contrast between the intellectual wealthy and the ignorant poor is constantly made so as to make the oppressed people appear ridiculous. So far has this gone that people are afraid to appear simple and fundamental for fear of being called childish.

Under Browder this influence found a reflection in our press. Articles were "learned" and obtuse when in order to be read by mass audiences they should have been entertaining and simple. The Left intellectuals were scared to death of ridicule by the sophisticated.

We ought to recognize snobbishness (or sophistication) as a weapon of the capitalist class. We should not let fear of ridicule hamper us from turning the workers' press into an organ of mass education. Let us try to make our ideas more entertaining and more easily understood by the novice.

Even the improved NEW MASSES can further improve itself along these lines. Below I am listing a few additions which suggested themselves to me:

1. The magazine can occasionally be livened by four or five pages of humorous cartoons illustrating abstract Marxist ideas on wages, values, etc.

2. A new short novel by a great writer might be serialized to run through several numbers.

3. If the budget permits there might be a few pages of photographs on glazed paper to attractively clothe the feature articles.

There is a great hunger for learning in America and a magazine that can satisfy this hunger in an entertaining manner will gain circulation. Why not make NM that magazine?

JACK ADELMAN.

Brooklyn.

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Bouquets from Indiana

TO NEW MASSES: The two articles "From Teheran to Fulton," by Hans Berger, and "The Aim of Soviet Policy," by John Stuart (NM, April 16) clear the skies and flood the anti-Russian capitalist offensive with the sunlight of truth.

BEN CARSON.

Sullivan, Ind.

TO NEW MASSES: I want to commend Richard O. Boyer on his article on the UN meeting (NM, April 9); also Philip Stander for the carefully written, exemplary book review (on *Reveille for Radicals*) in the same issue. I find it incumbent to comment on the Boyer piece as I have disliked his writing in the past.

ELIZABETH TOOHY.

Muncie, Ind.

Reader-Reviewer

TO NEW MASSES: Although the play *Strange Fruit* closed some time ago, a comparison of it and *Deep Are the Roots* and an analysis of each from a Marxian standpoint still may have some interest because of the wide audience that each of these productions reached, either in play or novel form.

Strange Fruit, by presenting a non-typical picture of the South as typical, was guilty of falsehood. Its incidents had the innocent air of coincidences: the white workers who come on the stage talking union depart guilty of lynch-murder; the rich mill owner, exploiting his workers though he does in the true bourbon manner, is the only man in town who tries to stop the lynchings; the only Negro in the play who resents the white man's overlordship becomes a murderer; the most liberal people shown are the son and daughter of the mill owner; not a poor white is shown who is not anti-Negro, and all the poor whites shown participate in the lynchings, etc.

Actually, as such competent investigators as Walter White have shown, the leadership of lynch mobs and the Ku Klux Klan is drawn largely from the privileged planter, business, and banking interests of the South. Not only do these people instigate lynchings; they *participate* in them. The leadership of the lynching in *Strange Fruit* is a poor plantation overseer. Such a man in the South is only a tool of the true reactionary clique—the bourbon owner class. To the audience of *Strange Fruit* the lower-class whites are shown as clearly and militantly anti-Negro, while the upper- and middle-class whites are just as clearly divided in their attitude. This smacks suspiciously of an old and familiar bourbon legend.

I am not saying that Miss Smith failed to "present the whole picture." I am saying that as the summation of a philosophy *Strange Fruit* is strangely lacking in any universality of application to the life of the South. The events in *Strange Fruit could* have happened. An artist of greater integrity would in some way have let his audience know just how small the chances are that they would—about one in a million.

Deep Are the Roots, a much better play, suffered from a similar defect. After a brilliant expose of the true class-alliance underlying the paternalistic actions of many Southern liberals, it made a complete belly-flop in the last act—after repudiating her ideals and returning to her bourbon father's domination, the liberal, Alice Langston, suddenly conquers her prejudices and makes the noble gesture. And this despite the careful build-up of an atmosphere of fear and hysteria. It can be seen, in denying Marxian principles of human behavior, both these plays plainly and simply failed to create believable human character—*Strange Fruit* to a much greater degree than *Deep Are the Roots*.

PAUL B. NEWMAN.

Florence, S. C.

Waste of Our Money

TO NEW MASSES: I received the following letter from my Congressman:

"Dear Mr. F.: I have your postal with reference to the Wood-Rankin Committee on Un-American Activities. That committee has been engaged in throttling efforts of the Russian Communists to take over our government. Frankly, I am of the opinion that this is not a bad activity. The committee has been misrepresented by certain people who have not a first loyalty to the United States. I still have that first loyalty and I feel that every effort to keep down Russian control of the United States should be encouraged. Very sincerely yours, John Taber (Member, Committee on Appropriations)."

I replied as follows:

"Dear Mr. Taber: Thank you for your note of April 13 that you favor continuing the Wood-Rankin Un-American Committee because it is engaged in throttling efforts of Russian Communists to take over our government. Since the committee has, and can have, no jurisdiction over Russian Communists it seems clear that it should be abandoned as a waste of your time and our money. It is my opinion that in fact the committee is engaged in throttling free speech of Americans, including Republicans, and that its continuance will encourage those enemies of freedom, the incipient American fascists, who want to take over our government."

LEWIS FISHER.

Aurora, N. Y.

Lerner's Lament

(*Continued from page* 12)

faming the Soviet Union and idealizing capitalism. ". . . if we are going to beat the totalitarian system," he writes, "in the race for world allegiance, we have to show what democracy can really be." Lerner, who identifies democracy with capitalism, and totalitarianism with socialism—much after the manner of the less pontifical Red-baiters—is a man who on occasion lets it be known that he is no mere liberal—not he—but a believer in socialism. His is a Sunday socialism, worn on special occasions and cut of the same cloth as Ernest Bevin's and Harold Laski's. This particular editorial was written on a weekday.

To Lerner the struggle of millions throughout the world against reaction, imperialism and war, against "conditions of backwardness and desolation" such as exist, for example, in India and Puerto Rico, is all a game, a race—with himself as refree, of course. And winning the race for capitalism is simply a matter of getting rid of some of the unsightly sores on its body or of a little semantic trick such as, he suggests, "adopting the slogan of 'democracy in one country'" to counter the Soviet slogan of "socialism in one country."

WHAT poverty of spirit this reveals! Why doesn't Lerner face up to the conclusions that flow from the facts he himself cites? How does it happen that it is the Soviet "totalitarian" system whose influence everywhere, in Europe and Asia, is being exerted toward strengthening democracy, toward weakening imperialist and feudal reaction, toward changing "conditions of backwardness and desolation?" And how does it happen that the influence of the "democratic" American and British systems is everywhere being exerted in the opposite direction? Is it all a trick, an optical illusion?

No one asks of liberals like Max Lerner that they accept socialism—not even on Sundays. But one ought to ask that they at least correct a political astigmatism which causes them to join the anti-Soviet cabal led by those who would massacre the OPA and who conspire against democratic rights. And one ought also to ask that they learn to identify the immediate enemy and cease being vague and voiceless while the United States and Britain try to use the UN as a club against socialist Russia and the democratic nations of Europe.

Yes, Mr. Lerner, it *is* later than you think. Stop posturing and whimpering. It's time to fight.

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review and comment

WEAPON FOR SPAIN

The case against Franco as expressed in the words and struggles of the people of Spain.

By MILT WOLFF

WIND IN THE OLIVE TREES, *by Abel Plenn. Boni & Gaer.* $3.

ON APRIL 17, the day the Spanish question was raised in the Security Council, the man who sat on Stettinius' left and guided him was a person by the name of Outerbridge Horsey. Mr. Horsey is the State Department's "expert" on the Spanish question; at least that is the way he has been introduced to me every time I visited the State Department to register an opinion. It seems that Mr. Horsey spent some time in Spain and actually made a tour of that country "unofficially, in order to get the real picture." The picture Mr. Horsey returned with was this: "Everyone in Spain is anti-Franco, *but* they feel that if Franco goes they will all, but all, be murdered in their sleep." So spoke the expert.

The State Department has many experts. Carlton J. H. Hayes, for instance. Mr. Hayes was our Ambassador to Spain and he wrote a book about it. The burden of his report is that Franco is "a Christian gentleman" and not a menace at all. And so on down the line.

Oddly enough, the US government occasionally employs the "wrong" kind of expert. One of these happened to be Abel Plenn, who was Carlton Hayes' Chief of Propaganda Analysis—until Hayes managed to remove his embarrassing presence. It seems that while Mr. Hayes was attending church every other day in Franco's company, Mr. Plenn was out digging up the facts.

Naturally Mr. Plenn's impressions and findings were quite different from those expressed by Messrs. Horsey and Hayes. Abel Plenn also wrote a book, *Wind in the Olive Trees*. Like Mr. Horsey, he too discovered that the Spanish people are anti-Franco. However, unlike Mr. Horsey, he found that the Spanish people fear death much less than they do the continuance of Franco's regime. He found that the Spaniards were only too willing to risk their lives in the fight to destroy the Franco regime. Not only willing but actually doing it, every day, and paying heavily for their patriotism.

Spaniards, just as you and I, don't relish dying. But they are dying. They are dying of starvation and of disease, of imprisonment and torture . . . and by the firing squad. They are dying by the thousands. And every time our government states that it will do nothing about Franco but call him nasty names, Franco kills another group of patriots. The last time Washington reassured Franco (the tripartite note) fifteen outstanding Spanish Republicans were murdered. There is no doubt in my mind that if the UN turns down the Polish request for action another group of Spaniards will die. You can count the days of Franco's rule in Spanish deaths.

The case for the world against Franco is completely chronicled in Abel Plenn's book. The facts are there for the world to see. The State Department conceals these facts in its vaults. Plenn's honesty is in glaring contrast to the State Department's cunning diplomacy. *Wind in the Olive Trees* is a beautifully written book, and every word of it rings true. Plenn "met the people." They talked to him, as he says, "not only because they trusted me but because they so desperately wanted America to know the truth." What Plenn's book actually accomplishes is the presentation of the case against Franco as expressed in the words and deeds of the Spanish people.

And of course, much more. For Plenn saw the Nazis in Spain and searched them out from behind their Spanish names and Spanish dummies. He portrays their overweening confidence in their safety and their contempt for the puny efforts of the democracies, with a bitterness born of a true understanding of our sufferings in the war against these same Nazis.

The corrupt and decadent regime of Francisco Franco is dissected and exposed by a masterful hand. For the first time we are given a portrayal of a fascist state in operation that reveals completely its rottenness and its reliance upon the vacillating policies of the US and Great Britain for its existence.

The case against Franco is complete. The issues are clear. What are the United States, Great Britain and their followers in the UN Security Council up to? Our President and his subordinates have claimed that the presentation of the Spanish case before the UN by Poland is a "political maneuver." By whom? Those who do not support Franco, or those who do? The late Gen. Patton said of the defeated Nazis that they were just another "political" grouping, just as are the Republicans or the Democrats. Is that what Mr. Truman means? Or does he mean that fascism is something that should be used in the Munich manner?

What the hell was all the shooting about at Cassino, the Ardennes, Normandy, etc.—politics?

Read Plenn's book and get your friends to read it. The fight against fascism, the fight for peace, the fight for a free Spain may be muffed by bad politics in the UN—but it will not end there. Plenn's book is a weapon in this fight, the kind of weapon that will prevail.

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A TROTSKYITE IN LOVE

Edmund Wilson's "mental corruption removes him from the daily concerns of human beings."

By CHARLES HUMBOLDT

MEMOIRS OF HECATE COUNTY, *by Edmund Wilson. Doubleday.* $2.

IN THE recent discussion on Art As a Weapon, one of the central questions raised was the relation of politics to writing. Many participants urged that we examine carefully the political degeneration of an author to determine how it had affected the quality of his work. In dealing with Edmund Wilson's latest book, I see that the matter cannot rest there. For Mr. Wilson's politics—true Trotzkyite snob that he is—are not a first cause; they, too, arose out of other elements in his development. Among those elements is a wasting mental corruption that removes him, as a chronically ill man is withdrawn, from the daily concerns of human beings. Without tracing his past performance, I'd say that anyone whose values were so deeply rotted could have been considered a revolutionary only if we mistook his self-estimate for our own judgment of him. Such a man was never anywhere near Communism.

Hecate County, otherwise known as Westchester, is the spiritual if not always the actual locale of the narrator. Mr. Wilson is a little ashamed of Westchester. So he prefaces his six stories with a photograph of a statue of the Greek goddess of the lower regions, and with a passage from Gogol (conveniently given in Russian as well as English) in which a rush of evil spirits seeks entrance to the body of a philosopher. Living in the underworld and possessed by such inhuman monsters, how can our hero avoid being a wretch? If you believe this is unfair to Mr. Wilson, know that he is proud to have you think of him as an evil person. It is his stock in trade, his line. Like an antique dealer, he drags out his bronze deity and whispers that she has the power to do God knows what harm to the possessor. He himself is worn out from serving her.

Mr. Wilson has partners in his claim to a monopoly of the tragic sense of life, among them Arthur Koestler and Alfred Kazan. In their eyes, Communists are Boy Scouts who do not understand the vast struggle between Good and Evil that goes on within and for the soul of man. And how, through no fault of his own, man (Mr. Wilson & Co.) is faced with irresistible temptations and does—whatever he pleases. I assure Mr. Wilson that we Communists understand this struggle very well (without giving it the religious benediction of capital letters). But we will let no one avoid responsibility for his mistakes or crimes by blaming God, the devil, or even, somewhat more pertinently, the social system. No one beats the rap by beating his breast, even when he beats as skillfully and pretentiously as does Mr. Wilson.

Of course, by his own standards, Mr. Wilson's alter ego, the first person of all the six stories, is a very small-time sinner. He is an art historian, studying the influence of the Industrial Revolution on the painting of the nineteenth century. He belongs to that school of vulgar critics who beat artists over the head for not using the symbols which they, the critics, have decided are acceptable for a given period of economic and social development.

We are less concerned, however, with our hero's job than with his preoccupation. Let sex rear its horrible head. The longest story of the book, "The Princess with the Golden Hair," traces two simultaneous affairs which the art critic pursues to their inevitable dissolution. The first is with a "fairy-tale princess"—a "beauty of an unusual kind," Imogen Loomis, who is married to a boring (naturally) Hecate County businessman. The piquancy of this romance is heightened by the lady's wearing a brace for a spinal ailment which turns out to be neurotic in character. The second is with Anna, a little taxi-dancer, picked up in the course of a slumming tour on Fourteenth Street. Though certain reviewers, notably Ralph Bates, are moved to compare Mr. Wilson with de la Rochefoucauld and de Maupassant—to the latter's disadvantage, even—he has nothing particularly original to offer, either in psychology or moral observation. The only new feature is the special type of sophisticated dying which the "hero" of all the stories goes in for:

"To me, on the verge of thirty, it was desolatingly, incontrovertibly evident that people under any conditions were the same wry pathetic freaks, and why should I go to the trouble of moving about among them in order to observe the shapes which their defects and distortions could take?"

For such a person, any love affair becomes a swamp where he writhes to keep from sinking beyond his hips, a contest in which he tries to preserve his cultural status or his doubtful manliness against the woman's naturalness and demands for affection. His feelings for Anna are a compound of admiration for her directness and honesty, and of a prissy appraisal of her as a nice, but not quite pedigreed animal. How fortunate for her that she had not "acquired bad manners," and that "I found it a continual agreeable surprise that she was not 'common' and that the quality of her intelligence was good." He watches her like a German housewife: "She will never take a drink if I am looking in her direction, as a dog will not eat when watched."

Imogen, on the other hand, is a woman of his own class. She belongs to a "set," and "... it was fun to be at home with all the sets, as one got to do, and not to be a part of any." When he catches gonorrhea through Anna, who has contracted it from her psychopathic husband, our lover immediately feels "free to redeem myself.

"It was unthinkable to go on living in that lazy and half-baked way. If I were not going to break with Imogen, I must make her divorce Ralph and marry me.

"But two things I had first to accomplish: I must establish the moral ascendency over Imogen which would be possible only after I had slept with her(!) and I must manage a bigger income."

He looks at Anna with disgust:

"But the snap in my sympathies occurred which sometimes takes place in one's relations with persons of an inferior class—though right up to the moment of the rupture one may have thought oneself on close terms of friendship—when something has made

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special demands on one's tolerance, one's trust or one's patience."

But our hero recovers from his high class melancholy as well as his common ailment. He dreams of forsaking his fine friends and keeping house with Anna in lowly Brooklyn:

"And there I would break with that bourgeois past in which I was still embedded; so I should drive myself out to that inexpensive level of living—free from social obligations, from waste—where the real analytic and creative thought as well as the building and the production were accomplished."

Does it matter how this drivel goes on, how it ends?

And yet even this rhapsodic prig has his solemn moment devoted to Red-baiting. Realizing that he wants Anna to die because "it would make life more comfortable again," he makes a date with Imogen. To kill time before their rendezvous, he walks through Greenwich Village.

"I bought a copy of the Communist paper and took it to read on a damp bench in Washington Square. I had not been getting it lately and it seemed to me now rather false in tone."

Hear, Hear, the moralist of the cocktail crowd breaks into politics. Incapable of love or any passionate thought, this spiritual castrate looks for something to pretend to have feelings about. And so the working class suffers his unwanted kisses, his doubts, waverings, petulance, injured sentiments, his all-is-finished poses, and finally his action for annulment.

How like Mr. Wilson and his Trotzkyite friends. He too had his condescending honeymoon with revolution, an interval never consummated. He cannot admit that his character defeated him, that he was too fastidious and vain for a struggle so full of hardship and contradiction and so lacking in external adulation. So he lies about it. In one story he even creates a rich mountebank who contributes to American fascist groups, talks of fascism as "perfectly sound,"—and ends up by throwing a party for Loyalist Spain. With such inept malice Wilson tries to wash away the blame he admits he feels about his divorce from the working class ("the fear of the poor and the humbly employed, in relation to whom he always feels guilt").

In 1941, Edmund Wilson published a book of criticism called *The Wound and the Bow*. The title was derived from the legend of Philoctetes, the possessor of a magic bow and a malodorous wound. The Greeks besieging Troy needed the bow, but they had to leave Philoctetes behind because they couldn't stand his smell. But in order to win Troy, they had to take the hero along with the bow. How this was accomplished is unimportant here, except insofar as it reveals Mr. Wilson's picture of himself as The Modern Artist. He too stinks like Philoctetes, but if society wants his services, it will have to take him, wound and all. He too is possessed by demons, like a Gadarene swine, but his wallowing is the price he expects people to pay for his talent.

The concept of the artist as a sensitive plant from whose sick roots beauty blossoms is not new. It is Thomas Mann's favorite theme. But it has never been so consciously degraded as in this provocateur's philosophy of the creative criminal. Such cultural blackmail can have only one effect: to divide the intellectual from the working class and the progressive elements in society, and to arouse their suspicions of him. Perhaps this is what Mr. Wilson aimed at.

Strip-Tease

OUT OF THIS CENTURY, *by Peggy Guggenheim. Dial.* $3.

PROMINENT among art collecting millionaires are the Guggenheims, who get a great part of the money they use to play with out of the shortened lives of the Chilean copper mine workers. Their specialty is gathering contemporary art, to which they add an urge to instruct the public. Mr. Solomon Guggenheim has set up a handsome Museum of Non-objective Art, in which people are given free leaflets describing the "vibrations" which this work of the "elite" sets up in the atmosphere, thus subtly raising the cultural level of the masses. Visitors then vainly try to attune themselves to these vibrations in front of large and completely vacuous canvases by Bruno Bauer and the Baroness Rebay. To prevent interference with this mystical transmission, Guggenheim bars from the museum his magnificent collection of truly giant moderns such as Cezanne, Modigliani, Seurat and Picasso, who deal in their work with people, nature and other such vulgar subjects.

Peggy Guggenheim, the niece of the copper king, prefers dada and surrealism; the opening show of her gallery some years back included such exhibits as a print of the Mona Lisa with pencilled moustaches.

Out of This Century has the inspiring quality of a peephole in an outhouse. Why it was written is a mystery. Peggy could not have wanted to explain herself to the public, for whom she has nothing but contempt. One can only assume that having lived for so many years among writers and artists, she felt a desire to see her name on something which, having words in grammatical order, might pass for literature. And just as a stage-struck woman, who can neither sing nor act, fills a role of sorts by undressing in public, so Miss Guggenheim, able neither to write or think, has performed a literary strip-tease. This book is the frankest personal record since Casanova, although it lacks the deeper honesty which made Casanova's self-portrait that of a human being as well as a jerk. This book is one-dimensional, frank but not honest. It tells all—but reveals little.

Saying little about the inner make-up of Peggy Guggenheim, it reveals even less about the more important subject of surrealist art, recording merely the names and some of the personal habits of the artists she collected. While Peggy must have liked the works well enough to buy them, her consuming interest seems to have been her ability to insert herself between the artists and their wives. The book shares something of the quality of surrealism itself, in its emphasis on the sexual and excretory functions. It contains some anecdotes which are destined for permanence as smutty stories. But if parts of it are funny, others arouse horror. One wonders about the two children she had by her first husband, who when barely in their teens had to become accustomed to her procession of lovers.

What is most wrong with contemporary art is the people who collect it. The tragedy of artists today is that, gifted with a knowledge and mastery of their craft unequalled in history, they have almost no avenues to a broad public, and almost no opportunity to serve an honest function in our society. Their output has inevitably been cramped and distorted by the necessity of appealing to the capricious tastes of people like the Guggenheims. This book provides ample proof of the great service which the masses whom Miss Guggenheim despises perform for art, by establishing an avenue through which artists can serve, instruct and

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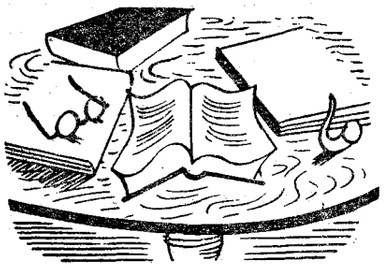

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HERBERT APTHEKER.

Make 'em Buy

THE PROCESS OF PERSUASION, *by Clyde R. Miller. Crown.* $2.

DR. MILLER, as founder of the Institute of Propaganda Analysis, has in the past done fine yeoman service on behalf of consumers and democratic tendencies and has struck out nobly against such subversive forces as Coughlin and other native fascists.

But *The Process of Persuasion*, his recent venture into print, is as tepid and obvious, when it is not misleading and treacherously superficial, as anything this side of Bruce Barton. The jacket proclaims the book as "an effective guide that will help put yourself and your ideas across, analyze the methods of advertising, sales talk and propaganda." Perhaps the crew-topped Yale boys who debate so gravely the "techniques" of persuading us to buy Luckies instead of Camels will find it rewarding. Perhaps in public relations plenums the parasitic lads of Free Enterprise will be impressed and suck thoughtfully upon their bulldog pipes when they read: "Persuasion . . . is in operation all around us. We see its results, for better or worse, in the great or small triumphs and failures in our daily lives; in vast fortunes built by advertising and merchandising; and in empires built by statesmanship." And again: "To understand others you must look at yourself. To understand yourself you must look at others."

Maybe it is legitimate, in a society based upon fraud and chicanery, for a university teacher to so supplement his income. Dr. John B. Watson did it, and numerous first-rate scientists have joined movie stars in endorsing all sorts of inferior commodities.

But it seems to this writer that scholarship and professorial prestige should not stoop to conquer a mouse; these processes of persuasion should be left to the Phi Beta Kappas who regard Herbert Hoover as a Great Engineer.

JOHN BRIGHT.

Worth Noting

"FOLKLORE in the Metropolis" is the subject of the second annual all-day folklore conference to be held on May 4 at the Elizabeth Irwin High School, 40 Charleton St., New York City. The conference is under the auspices of Camp Woodland, the originator of the annual Folk Festival of the Catskills. It will bring together a varied group of people—teachers, anthropologists, trade unionists, dancers, inhabitants of Tin-Pan Alley—who have a common interest in the collection and utilization of folklore. The all-day conference will be followed by an evening program of music and dance in folk tradition. Among those participating will be Ben A. Botkin, editor of *A Treasury of American Folklore;* Herbert Halpert of "American Folksong Publications"; Alan Lomax and Pete Seeger, experts who have spent years in collecting, studying and recording folklore from all parts of the nation; Ruth Rubin, folk singer and student of modern Jewish secular songs; Svatava Pirkova Jakobson, who will tell what happens to folklore traditions brought over from Europe; Woody Guthrie; the Jefferson Chorus.

ANNA SOKOLOW will present a program of new dances on May 12, at the Theresa L. Kaufman Auditorium. Assisted by Sophie Cait, pianist, and Arno Taney, baritone, her solo concert will include dances on Jewish, Mexican and Spanish themes.

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sights and sounds

TALKING BEASTS & MAGIC CREATURES

A review of four current art shows which have common elements of style and content.

By WILLIAM THOR BURGER

"ANYWHERE, out of the world," wrote Baudelaire a hundred years ago, setting the compass for one of the main directions of modern art. Following the migratory muse, painters set out on vast columbiads of exploration to the Alps, the South Seas, Mexico, the Congo, Tibet, the Poles, the past, the moon and the dark inner tunnels of the mind. Characterizing these explorations in a witty article, *"La Renaissance de l'archaique,"* in the *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, Raymond Schwab some years ago wrote of them as a search for a kind of eternal childhood in a golden age on some floating fatherland of all primitive beings. "Archaia," Schwab called this never-never land, and showed how artists tried to recapture its naive essence in folk art, primitive arts, the art of children, and archaic arts.

New York offers this month a peculiarly interesting set of chronicles of the painter's travels to anywhere else. The Museum of Modern Art has a collection of South Pacific artifacts. Gauguin, the great escapist, is on at Wildenstein's, while Chagall is having his most important American show at the Museum of Modern Art. In Radio City the Art Directors have gathered the best commercial art of 1945.

Thus one may simultaneously examine Gauguin, an artist who left Paris to draw on the life and culture of the South Pacific, and the very culture to which he went. Chagall, who flows from Gauguin stylistically, is in a sense Gauguin's obverse. He is the child of a folk culture who escapes to Paris, only to return in memory to the myths of his village. The Art Directors' show mingles all three. The art of the South Pacific and other primitive arts are directly presented there, while the style for which Gauguin and Chagall are in part responsible has fundamentally affected the style of commercial art. Moreover these posters and magazine covers of the art director's show are the perverted folk art of our century.

These four shows have common elements of style and content. The worlds represented in them are symbolic, animistic, full of talking beasts and magic creatures, and populated with an unusually high proportion of naked men and women.

There are, however, marked differences between the authentic primitive art and the other three. The Oceanic artifacts at the Modern Museum are all useful objects of daily life to which decoration has been added not only for visual delight but also to increase the efficiency of the tool by warding off evil influences and propitiating good ones. Even the category of religious objects, the ceremonial robes, head collections, totemic roof poles and phallic images are, in terms of primitive cultures, tools to control the blind forces of nature by man's force of magic.

The Pacific natives deal with reality as they know it. Rather than a paradise, the islands are for them a world from which life must be wrung by hard work, and which is capriciously malicious and fatal. The images in their art are the things they know in daily life, the phallic man, the pregnant woman, the hunting beast, and the hunted. The effective quality of these beings is represented with terrifying reality. The crocodile on the war canoe is all bite. The little hunger images from Easter Island are as horrible as photos of Belsen. There is no attempt to construct another world to which one can escape, but a definite attempt to control the present and real world.

TO THIS watery continent already dissolving under the impact of imperialism, Gauguin traveled in search

"Memorial," oil by Claude Clark, at the RoKo Gallery.

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of Eden. His career, traced in the good and extensive show at Wildenstein's, has become semi-legendary. Gauguin is the hero of the Sunday painters, the individual who by a supreme act of will leaves the iron routine of buying and selling to become an artist-creator, who deserts his practical wife for vast numbers of fascinating brown-skinned beauties and casts off his drab pin stripe and Homburg for yellow pants or a grass G-string. He is the man of the *Moon and Sixpence,* who defies the laws and codes of society, sneers at its penalties, and does exactly what he wants to do for art's sake.

Gauguin's actual course was much more hesitant and marked by many efforts to escape. Voyaging to Peru as a child and to sea as a youth, he did not settle down and get married until he was 25. A successful stockbroker, he became acquainted with Pisarro, Cezanne, and the Impressionists as a collector. He was a Sunday painter at first. He waited ten years to make his break to Bohemia, the left-bank Parnassus. Dissatisfied there with weekend excursions to the country, he went to Brittany, the most exotic and primitive section of France, and also the cheapest to live in. The next year he went to the Panama canal as a digger, and then, by accident to Martinique. The Caribbean "Woman and Sunflowers" (1887), the earliest piece in the exhibition, shows how Gauguin's vague discontent with Impressionism was precipitated out into a new style under the influence of tropical color and life. The first large group of pieces in the show are from Pont Aven, where Gauguin lived after his return to Brittany. The colored lithographs of that year with their linear boundaries, rythmic shapes and strong flat colors are a radical departure from Impressionism, as is also the new subject matter of the life and religion of the peasants.

Now poor and in search of subjects that would sell, Gauguin decided in 1891 to try Tahiti. Life there, he thought, would be free in every sense, and his task would be to describe it. His first landscapes, like the magnificient *"Te Raau Rahi"* (1891), are relatively naturalistic, comparable to Winslow Homer, for example. But as he began to find life in Tahiti merely real he began to idealize it in his paintings. Still poor, sick, bitter with petty colonial tyrannies, and trying desperately to return to Paris, Gauguin nonetheless painted and wrote of an idyllic life under the coconut palms in the embrace of his Tehuara. He posed the natives like archaic Greeks, as in the "Landscape" in which the man leading the horse is borrowed from the Parthenon frieze. Or he compared the Polynesians to primitive Christians, as in the well known *"Ia Orana Maria,"* which shows a Tahitian Virgin and Child. Quite freely he changed native mythology, costume and art.

Back in Paris in 1894 he set up a fantastic studio equipped with tapa cloth, shields and a Javanese mistress, and tried to cash in on his exoticism. In Paris he cut a wonderful series of woodblocks, some of the best of which are on display, which recreate from memory the Tahiti that he had fled in horror. The "Land of Delights" presents a Polynesian Eve with a whole basketful of Tahitian apples in the middle of a fruitful jungle.

In debt again, his ankle broken in a fight over his Javanese mistress, his studio ransacked, Gauguin returned to Tahiti in 1896.

It is from this period that the wonderful *"Poemes Barbares,"* the "Mango Carriers," the "Bathers" and the "Ship" date. They are large figures whose calm actions seem almost ritual. Approaching death, with open festering sores, actually hungry, without sufficient materials, and sometimes jailed for supporting the natives against the colonial officials, Gauguin paints a paradise which becomes ever more glowing and perfect.

The liberating influence of Gauguin, which led to Fauvism and Expressionism, cannot be overestimated. The man who was never happy where he was improved on the closest approximation to Paradise this side of the Expulsion and created a myth which still persists of a rich and simple life clothed in bright barbaric colors.

To the Paris of 1910, already under the influence of Gauguin's style, came a talented young Jew from Vitebsk, Marc Chagall. Reversing the direction of Gauguin's voyage, Chagall came from a folk culture to Paris in order to find a milieu in which art could live and be understood. Once in Paris he went back in memory to his village, and in painting his memories opened the road to the still farther countries of surrealist imagination.

The show at the Museum of Modern Art is a comprehensive one that omits much that is repetitious, but in-

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cludes all that is important. It permits the summarization of Chagall's art.

Chagall's world, peopled by symbols of the village, himself and his wife, Bella, is painted to correspond to a mental rather than a visual or tactile reality. Most apparent is its lack of gravity. People fly wildly off in all directions or stand on tip-toe on housetops which also float effortlessly. Houses and railway trains are placed upside down or sideways. Whatever naturally defies gravity abounds in his paintings: acrobats, jugglers, angels, birds, one-legged creatures and floating fish. Even a candle flame burns straight downwards. Objects not only lack mass, but are transparent and interlocking. Musical instruments whose sound floats through the air, flowers whose odor the breeze carries and alcohol which affects the sense of balance are everywhere. They are painted in intense, unnatural colors which flow past the boundaries of forms. These film colors are like those associated synesthesically with sounds, smells and tastes.

Things represented interlock to form a kind of visual metaphor. The cello player is represented with the body of a cello, across which he fiddles as if to say that he puts body and soul into his music. A chancellery clerk in Gogol's *Dead Souls* is shown as so much a part of his job that his head and hands are drawn as part of the desk top, distinct from his body. Or a lamppost with legs is shown to indicate that Chagall used to see it while walking at night. To indicate his position as a refugee he paints an uprooted tree. Similarly a whole series of love poems to his muse, Bella, shows her actually lifting him to the heavens, or has her profile conjoint with his to mark their unity.

This floating, transparent, interweaving world has the physical characteristics, so to speak, of the mental world. Its population consists of village characters and their animal comrades of Jewish and Russian folk tales. These legendary beasts have no specific meaning but gather to themselves a series of folk connotations. The ubiquitous rooster, for example, has overtones of the *zolotou petuschok*, the golden rooster of the Baba Yaga, the sacrificial white cock of the Jewish and Christian religions, the firebird, and the little red hen.

Chagall's art is the result of the integration of folk art traditions and the

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Editorial

Exploding the Iranian Myth
Frederick V. Field

The Face of a Social-Democrat—Walter P. Reuther
Carl Winter

Wages and Profits Under Monopoly Capitalism
Alexander Bittelman

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most sophisticated Western style, of folk legends and an extremely sensitive personal imagination. The Museum of Modern Art show traces his development chronologically. The "Death," painted in 1908 while he was still in Russia, has much of his future content, but not until the Parisian pictures of 1910-14, when he adapts the new Cubist style, does his imagination become free to clothe the village in fantasy. Returning to Russia in 1914, and faced with the reality of the village, his work takes on a new sobriety and solidity. Married to Bella and caught up in the wild rush of the Revolution, he drops both his new realism and a good part of his Cubist baggage for a freer style more closely dependent on folk culture. From this period is the wildly exalted "Double Portrait." He had a project to cover the whole of Vitebsk with murals in his new style, and later actually collaborated with the Jewish State Theater in Moscow in designing sets and even a style of acting consonant with his version of village life. In the lobby of the Museum theater there is a rare and interesting project for a mural in the Jewish Theater in Moscow. But somehow his audience failed to recognize themselves in Chagall's work, and reluctantly, in 1922, he returned to Paris.

In 1919 he had painted a picture which he actually entitled with Baudelaire's phrase: "Anywhere out of the World." This picture is now in New York, but unfortunately not on exhibition. In Paris this was his destination. His love for Bella alternates with circus themes. Bella is celebrated against ever more personal and delicate memories of the village. In the "Lilacs" (1930) the flowers form a jungle, lush as Gauguin's Tahiti, which, floating over the Dvina, cups the lovers. The other theme centers around the circus and represents acrobats and clowns performing difficult feats of balance, just as Chagall performs his cute tricks for the collector's charmed applause. Chagall's painting lost intensity in these years and his first really bad painting is the "Circus" in the Rubinstein collection.

He had gone as far as he could from either Paris or the Village or the world when in 1933 he was faced with Hitler's coming to power. His pictorial language had been understandable at first because he drew on a body of symbols of folk culture. Later, when it became more esoteric, its repeated use in his own paintings had permitted limited translations to be made by those willing to study him. His incomprehensibility even had a certain charm that matched the remoteness of his world.

But when in 1933 he wished to speak to an audience instead of coyly withdrawing from it, he ran into his own barriers. Like a GI trying to explain to an Italian that the field is mined, his language becomes loud, colorful, violent, even picturesque, but not comprehensible. His pictures burst with a mute rage, explode in troubled nightmares and fitful apocalyptic flashes, but communicate with difficulty. He deserts for the moment his own language and tries to speak in ours. The result, the big "White Crucifixion," describing the plight of the Jews under Hitler, is clear but as awkward as the first efforts of a foreigner in a new tongue.

Chagall has carried the voyage Baudelaire called for as far as anyone could, and he demonstrates its merits and defects. What is good in him comes from the witty and tender combination of folk traditions, modern style and personal sensitivity. When he leaves his roots and sails off into his private wonderland where none can follow, he fails.

THE Art Directors' show is the great annual event for American commercial art. Their publication is the style dictionary for the succeeding year, and their awards for the best car card or poster carry the prestige of membership in the Academy.

This year's show, somewhat conservative in character, is marked by the large number of "fine" artists represented. Tony Refregier, Luigi Lucioni, Fletcher and David Stone Martin, Joe Hirsch, Bernie Perlin, Dong Kingman, John Carroll, Doris Lee and Rockwell Kent, among others, give a fair cross-section of American fine art, which comes off second best in comparison with the purely commercial. The only notable event of this year's show is a head by John Gannon which has finally succeeded in equalling a colored photograph, down to the peculiar reds and blues of a kodachrome shot.

The commercial art of the Art Directors' show has usurped the place once occupied by folk art. It still has some of the stylistic qualities of folk

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art in comparison to fine art, and like folk art it is applied to a tool—the ad—for use. Many of the entries go back to primitive arts, and even the particular art of the South Pacific. But, like Chagall and Gauguin, the commercial artists make use of the elements of folk and primitive styles for their own ends. It is not true folk art, but a popular art of escape to the copywriter's nirvana. It is an art produced for the people, not by them. Folk art in the past was produced by the class which consumed it, whereas commercial art is produced by one class for consumption by others. Folk arts dealt with the problems, beliefs and daily work of the people, whereas commercial art creates problems that never existed and fosters beliefs from above. It creates a never-never land where sausages, brides and rubies are supernaturally beautiful and abundant. Food fantasies, sex fantasies and prestige fantasies are combined in a push-button atomic Eden. Where primitive arts seek to aid production by controlling the forces of magic, commercial art seeks to increase consumption by presenting a world under full control.

Sparing no cost and overlooking no technique, the art directors combine the direct presentation of folk and primitive arts with the vivid imagination of escapist painters to arrive at a pictorial language of considerable clarity and force. Although what they have to say is idiotic, their language has social currency, through fostering the Great American Dream, the modern equivalent of Breugel's "Land of Pies."

An art of greater clarity and force is needed if ever Americans are to be awakened from their poppy-dream contemplation of promised abundance to the actual task of creating that abundance.

FILMS

THE one serious work of film art this week can be viewed at the Little Carnegie. It is a three-reel film starring Arturo Toscanini, The Westminster Choir, Jan Peerce and the NBC Orchestra playing Verdi's "Hymn to the Nations." When Toscanini first broadcast his version of this composition, to which he had added the anthems of the United Nations, it made for a thrilling experience. It is even more so on the screen. In feeling and purpose it does more than signalize the occasion of its first presentation, the fall of Mussolini and the liberation of Italy. In the faces of the singers, in the surging voice of Peerce, in Toscanini's intensity, in the spirit of the players and the beat of the music, the hope for genuine amity among nations is eloquently voiced.

Watching an orchestra playing for more than two reels can become a boring business, but Irving Lerner, who produced, edited and helped direct the film, makes it a fascinating experience from first to last. The cutting is of a high order, and gives nice movement to the film. The introduction of Jan Peerce in closeup at the very moment that his voice is heard is a masterly piece of timing, and gives a power to his solo introduction that would have been lost in the average pattern of film making.

For the rest you will enjoy watching Toscanini as this fierce and tender man of music leads the orchestra. He sings along with the choir, he plays every instrument and negotiates every passage. Watching his face, you sense everything that is happening in front of him. Under the magic of his baton "The International," "The Marseillaise," the anthems of Great Britain and United States contribute a common note to the elation of victory. As an elementary definition of unity, this film should be shown to every delegate of the UN and his secretary.

WHATEVER pretenses vaudeville may have once had as a shirt-sleeve art, it now reflects folksay about as much as a Magyar harvest dance at Radio City Music Hall resembles a group of Hungarian peasants. Of course, the blatant stage Irishman, Jew, Negro, Swede, were its main props even in the loud days of its glory, but alongside the crude stereotypes were songs like "Drill, Ye Tarriers, Drill," and countless sly references to authority that delighted the workaday audiences.

When Florenz Ziegfeld came along, he taught vaudeville how to use an oyster fork. He substituted silk stockings for tights and introduced the elegant racket known as Glorifying the American Girl. Before that day, the Tired Businessman bought his front row tickets with a smirk, but after

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Ziegfeld he became a patron of High Art. The old standbys: the drunk, the nitwit, the braggart, the gold-digger, the comic-strip "national" types, were untouched. But the emphasis was on refinement, not only of tone, but of presentation. The virtuosity of the performer became all-important, his material being the time-tried stuff that characterized the above types.

Ziegfeld had the technicolor idea long before technicolor was invented. The poor man, he did the best he could; but he was born too soon. At the peak of his career he announced that he was spending $800,000 for three musicals. This news elicited an incredulous public gasp. But those were days of relative innocence. Today, the Hollywood musical producer spends that much on one production before he even takes his coat off.

In the current Ziegfeld Follies (Capitol) the types are as stale as they ever were (the acts of Keenan Wynn, Victor Moore, Red Skelton); as vulgar as ever (the Jewish housewife of Fanny Brice); as offensive as ever (the Negro drunks and knife-throwers who form the background for Lena Horne's number). But these singers, pantomimists and comics are the last word in technical perfection. They are the super-vaudeville performers. Further, if the Ziegfeld opulence was glorification, then what the movies do for the female figure is deification. What group of goddesses ever enjoyed the reverence with which the Goldwyn girls are served up?

Thus the threadbare stereotype is still around in all its familiar features; but sunk in countless layers of plush, it is infinitely easier on the average eye and ear.

Much of this goes for *Kid From Brooklyn* (Astor). Here too, Danny Kaye's technique is stressed, his material regarded as a necessary evil. In this, as in his previous films, the plot is fantastic, and exists only as a series of situations from which to spring the all-important gag. All the circumstances are as contrived as a Pat and Mike story, and just about as funny. The chief difference is, of course, Danny Kaye himself. In the film he is a milkman who by a series of accidents becomes the challenger of the reigning middleweight champ. Since he is no more plausible as a milkman than he is as a fighter, your sense of reality is not strained too much.

The most hilarious moments of the picture are his ring appearances, and

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at least one incident is reminiscent of a Chaplin situation. In his ring debut he transmits the terror of a man caught in circumstances that threaten him with extinction. Driven into a corner against the ropes, he looks about him in sheer helplessness, and then hurls himself at the neck of his opponent, to which he clings in desperation. It takes the combined pryings of an army of officials to work him loose.

The rest of the time Kaye is more boisterous than witty. The high spot of the film is his singing of "Pavlova," which he does in a way that will make his fans admire him more than ever. While he is resting from his labors, MGM brings on the hip and thigh brigade, which does its smiting from behind as gaudy and as leering a series of costumes as you will ever encounter.

IT TAKES but a cursory glance at Disney's current opus, *Make Mine Music* (Globe) to make you realize that his output is becoming progressively worse. From *Three Little Pigs* on, his work has lost steadily in freshness. The animal characters of *Three Little Pigs* were endowed with human qualities as a child might picture them. They had the naive and troubled and exuberant reactions of the world of the nursery. Evil and virtue were the evil and virtue of the child mind. Thus the wolf was evil, but not horrendous. Some of this quality pops up in *Snow White, Pinnochio, Dumbo,* and *Bambi,* but it is less and less evident in his succeeding releases. In *Three Caballeros* it is totally absent, replaced instead by a vulgarity that is imitative of Hollywood at its worst.

Make Mine Music consists of ten independent cartoons, each being threaded to the whole by its musical idea. Except for the two Goodman numbers, "After You're Gone" and "All the Cats Join In," and two others, "Casey at the Bat" and "The Whale That Wanted To Sing at the Met," none of these cartoons would do much individually for any program. Most disappointing of all was "Peter and the Wolf," set to Prokofieff's music. Disney's wolf, a monstrous creature that roars like a lion, is guaranteed to frighten any kiddy out of his nightclothes.

Three of the items, "Without You," "Blue Bayou" and "Two Silhouettes," are so bad that one is led to suspect Disney believes audiences will take anything he throws at them.

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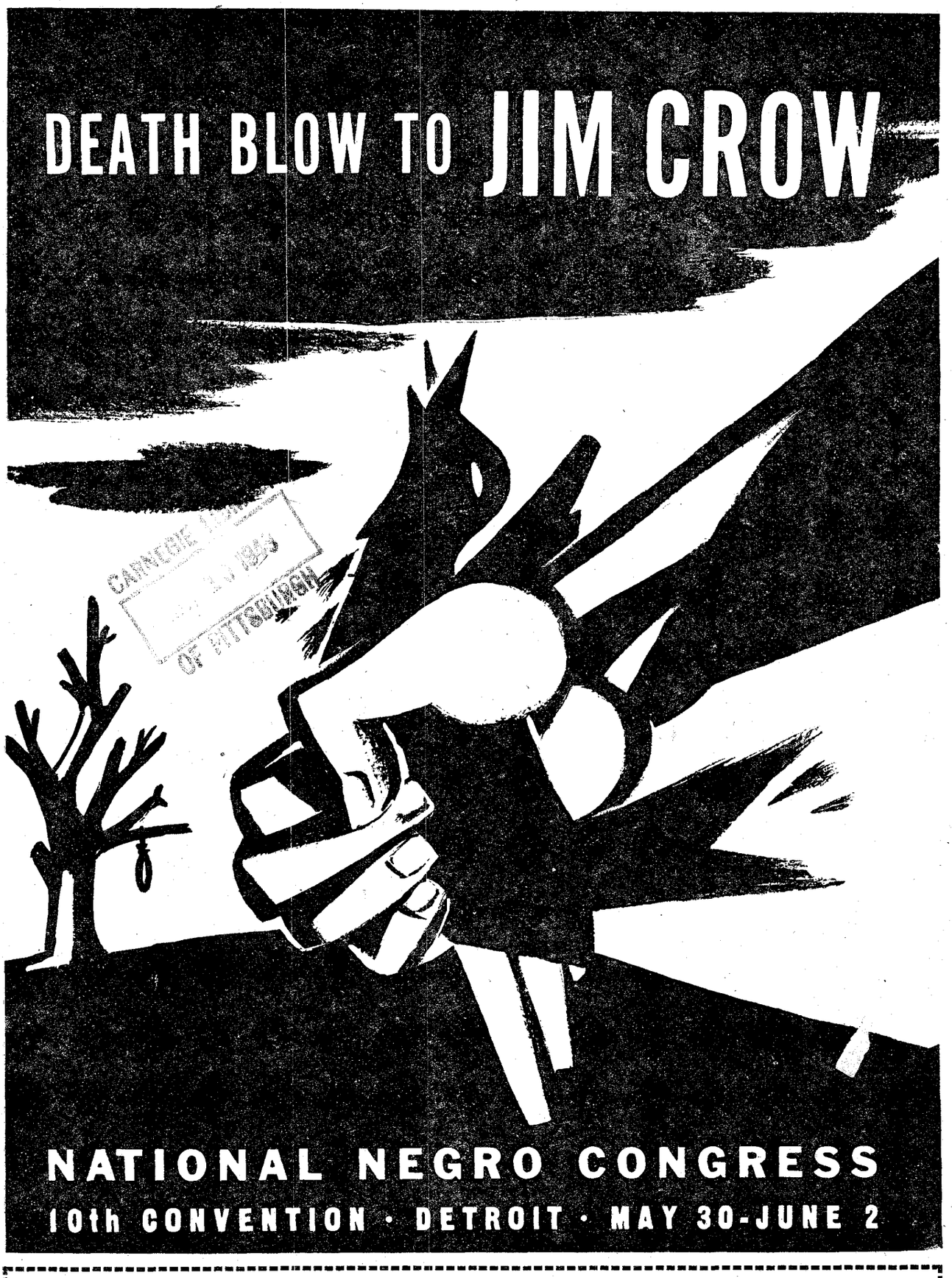

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